**Reviewer's report**

**Title:** Long-term Impact of Four Different Strategies for Delivering an On-line Curriculum about Herbs and Dietary Supplements

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 31 May 2006

**Reviewer:** John M Harris Jr.

**Reviewer's report:**

**General**

This paper, like the one preceding it, is clearly written. The specific finding is that there was little difference between the four study groups at 6-10 months, which was also the finding of the previous paper, using data from 11-15 weeks following randomization. In light of the multiple prior publications on this work, this finding is of limited interest and much of the background information and discussion does not need repeating here.

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**Major Compulsory Revisions** (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

I feel that this paper should be revised prior to publication to move beyond a restatement of previous papers and presentation of one new data point. The core study finding can be presented in a similar fashion as it is now, but it is not as necessary to repeat information about HDS as it is to reference and discuss the other studies of Internet CME of comparable follow-up, explaining what this study adds to an understanding of long-term effects of Internet CME (or distance learning in general). The authors note a need for cost-effectiveness information, but they do not provide any information on the costs of their four interventions, even relative costs, in their paper. Such comparisons would be helpful to others. Lastly, there is a large body of educational work suggesting that, in general, comparative studies are not helpful. Cook, however, outlines an agenda for computer-based learning (Academic Medicine 2005;80:541-548) that the authors should reference in this article. They should tell readers how their work is theory-guided and how it does or does not advance the agendas outlined by Cook.

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**Minor Essential Revisions** (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Please define HDS (or other abbreviations) before first use (in the abstract). “Impacted,” although commonly misused, means “wedged or packed together.” Outcomes were only impacted would sound better as Outcomes were only altered by/affected by/related to (or something similar). These are minor quibbles, however. The paper reads well.

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**Discretionary Revisions** (which the author can choose to ignore)

None.

**What next?:** Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No

**Declaration of competing interests:**
I declare that I have no competing interests