Reviewer's report

Title: Learning while Evaluating: The Use of an Electronic Evaluation Portfolio in a Geriatric Medicine Clerkship

Version: 3 Date: 30 November 2005

Reviewer: Lori Roscoe

Reviewer's report:

General
In general the authors addressed my concerns. However, the second question, "are the 50% of students in the initial surveys who strongly to somewhat agree to feeling comfortable using the MEEP the same ones who were in the mandatory introductory sessions?" is not answered on page 7, third paragraph, line 6--in fact there is no 3rd paragraph on page 7. Instead, in the results section, where this would need to be addressed, page 9, 2nd paragraph, line 5 "The initial survey . . ." fails to address whether the authors can separate results for those who attended introductory sessions and those who did not. If the authors can't report results on comfort level using the MEEP for the students attending and not attending the introductory session, then that sentence at least needs to say that 52% of students reported that they strongly to somewhat agreed that they were comfortable using the MEEP, regardless of whether or not they attended the introductory sessions. It is clearer in this version that the introductory sessions improved skill development, but to further comment about the introductory sessions influencing comfort with the evaluation and feedback mechanism, it would be much more convincing to say something like, "Of students attending intro sessions, 80% reported strongly to somewhat agreeing that they were comfortable using the MEEP, while among those who did not attend intro sessions, only 20% reported strong to somewhat agreement that they were comfortable with the MEEP." Even if there is no difference in comfort with the method, the two groups should be compared. I am not trying to be difficult, but I do not see that the authors addressed this concern at all.

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

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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)

The above point needs to be addressed, and it should be fairly straightforward to do so. Please show separate results for the two groups, or clarify that the groups are combined when evaluating comfort using the MEEP. I trust that the authors can clarify this point to address my concern.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Accept after minor essential 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.