Reviewer’s report

Title: Prof-in-a-Box: using internet video-conferencing to assist students in the gross anatomy lab.

Version: 1 Date: 25 October 2006

Reviewer: Gary L Nieder

Reviewer’s report:

General
This paper reports the author’s attempt to use videoconferencing to provide faculty support to the gross anatomy lab. The study addresses a problem of ever-increasing importance in medical education – a shortage of qualified gross anatomy faculty.

This report is very interesting and the paper, in general, well written. The author was able to achieve his goals of assembling a workable, secure, user-friendly videoconferencing system from mainstream commercial hardware and software at minimal cost. The system was used in a manner that the students, in general, found useful and worth integrating into the course.

The description of the system and how it was used is detailed enough to allow anyone to easily duplicate the experience.

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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)

1. I have some questions about the questionnaire results which might be clarified:

a. Table 1 seems to only add confusion to the results reported in the text. If 63 students completed the questionnaire, why are only 60m sets of student responses listed in Table 1?

b. How and why were students able to answer both a and b for question 3, as reported in the table?

c. Why was option f “not applicable” included for question 1. What does this mean? Did the 22 students who responded ‘f’ not use PiB at all? If so, why are many of these students rating the program very useful?

d. Along the same line, a few students who used PiB “hardly at all” rated it very useful.

2. All of the comments included in the report are positive. Were there any useful negative comments that might be used to improve the system or how it is used? It is interesting that even students who didn’t use the program much and/or didn’t find it very useful, would like to see it continued. They must see real potential in this resource - again, I would like to see any suggestions the students had for improvements. In my experience, students ALWAYS have suggestions!

3. The author might include a brief list of structures that were identified via the system, just to give the reader some idea of the level of detail that can be distinguished this way. Also, were there any technical limitations of the system? Was the monocular mode of video ever an issue in helping the students? Was lighting an issue?

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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 of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.