Reviewer's report

Title: The perception of Medical Students and academic staff about the characteristics of a good clinical teacher: an analytical cross-sectional study

Version: 2 Date: 14 November 2005

Reviewer: Myriam Deveugele

Reviewer's report:

General
This paper deals with a very important topic: perception of medical students and academic staff. As the authors explain in the introduction teachers are role-models and it is useful to do research on their characteristics. The introduction and problem setting is OK for me.
My major problems start with the method.
The authors use a sort of checklist. They do not mention how this checklist was made, is there any validity or reliability study done? Are the topics taken from an existing questionnaire? If the answer is no to both questions mentioned than a pilot study to validate the questionnaire must be done. It also seems to me that a checklist with yes or no, is not appropriate. A 5 point Likert scale is maybe better. Asking to tick if somebody is punctual, ethical... or not, is not easy and subject to social diserability.
Another problem with the checklist is that the 15/13 items are connected with each other. If you find somebody ethical than it is quite normal to find the person trutful or respectful. The correlations coefficients are maybe just an interpretation of the same construct.
I suggest that the authors make (or use a existing) questionnaire, do a validity study, conduct principal component analysis in order to find the constructs, do reliability tests and offer the questionnaire then to the targetgroup.

Not being a statistician I still have doubts about the methods used to analyse the data. I do not think that Pearson correlations is usefull here, I should suggest to use Kappa. But statistical review is essential.

I have also problems with the results and the discussion but since the method section has to be re-thought it is not useful to give remarks on the results/discussion.

The topic is important, too bad that the method is weak. I suggest the authors to re-do the study with better questionnaires and sound scientific methods.

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

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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)
Headings of the tables are not clear.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
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: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests