Reviewer's report

Title: Perceptions on the Importance of Gerontological Education by Teachers and Students of Undergraduate Health Sciences: An Exploratory Study

Version: 1 Date: 29 September 2006

Reviewer: Laura Diachun

Reviewer's report:

General
I believe that this paper addresses a major and fundamental concern which relates to the training of all health care professionals. It attempts to address perceptions of gerontological education from the perspective of the instructor, which adds a novel component, but unfortunately lacks sufficient detail and discussion within the current format of the manuscript.

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

1) Although the authors have had the manuscript translated into English, a significant number of spelling and grammatical errors still exist. I also question whether at times, the translation has altered the meaning/interpretation of the results. See #2

2) The conclusions don’t seem to relate to the study question posed. "The purpose of this study was to evaluate the perception of students and teachers toward current education programs in gerontology" yet the conclusion states "teachers and undergraduate students of sciences of the health (in English: Health Sciences) have a negative perception of ageing linked to potential ageism". This does not directly flow from the results nor does it address the study question. While the two may be linked, this linkage is indirect ie if one has a negative view of ageing they may feel curriculum on aging is not important...but based on the results presented, I am not sure how the authors have come to the conclusion that students and teachers have a negative perception of ageing.

3) Although the question posed by the study has merit, the content of the paper does not suggest how the authors attempted to answer this question. The study was to evaluate "perceptions of current educational programs" yet participants were asked about their own personal education, the main problems with teaching in this area and their perspective on future educational priorities.

4) The methods section is weak and lacks detail. It would be helpful to have more details about the participants: gender, age, discipline, extent of training, level of study. The abstract indicates that participants also had an "introductory workshop". This is not mentioned or explained in the text of the manuscript. More detail regarding the content and validity of the survey tools as well as content and structure of the interview is needed.

5) The authors find that students place more value on gerontological education and yet the paper seems to emphasize that the main issue is student attitude and lack of student knowledge. Is it not the reverse? Are the instructors the real barrier to optimizing education? This warrants emphasis in the discussion section.

6) The first quote in the results section is somewhat contradictory and doesn't fully support the authors' assertion.

7) Method of statistical analysis is not adequately described in the text.

8) Teacher's priorities in the teaching of gerontology: It is not clear if the results in this section were predetermined or in fact, determined as a consequence of qualitative data analysis (which seems to be what the authors suggest). Quotes like "some teachers don't have enough knowledge on this topic" suggest that the categories of teaching priorities were pre-determined rather than identified by thematic analysis of participant responses. The quotes put forward warrant further scrutiny to ensure that they are in fact in the correct category.

9) Table 1 lacks detail and warrants clarification in the text. What is a theoretical or methodological problem
associated with current teaching practices? Please give examples. Are the participants rating these
categories with respect to themselves? or the other participants (teachers rating students, students rating
teachers)?

10) The major focus of the discussion (Blackburn 2005) seems a bit erroneous to the paper or at minimum is
not tied in tightly enough.

11) Review the conclusions for relevance.

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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) The meaning of the term methodological knowledge is not clear to me (under problems that affect
teaching). Please define and give an example.

2) Sciences of the Health of typically know as Health Sciences.

3) I believe that Transversal study may be more commonly known as a cross sectional study.

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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 of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.