Reviewer's report

Title: 'It gives you an understanding you can't get from any book'. The relationship between medical students' and doctors' personal illness experiences and their performance: a qualitative and quantitative study

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Reviewer: Erica Frank

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From the ms.' title onward, the authors grossly overstep their bounds. In particular they claim to speak about "medical students", but only have data from 1 UK med school.

It's not only anecdotes about docs' personal illness experiences and their effect on pts (beginning of abstract) -- there's plenty of substantial data and literature from our Women Physicians' Health Study (and other sources).

They paint a typically (and mythologically) bleak picture of dr's health status, and its relationship with our patients. Regarding the Healthy Doc=Healthy Patient relationship, they should start with a look at http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/reprint/291/5/637?maxtoshow=&HITS=10&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=1&author1=Frank%2C+Erica&andorexacttitle=and&andorexacttitleabs=and&andorexactfulltext=and&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&sortspec=relevance&resourcetype=HWCIT to understand better what is going on here. Regarding our health status, they emphatically state that it is poor, without any data that I can see to support it, and plenty of data (in the JAMA article, above) to refute it. They seem almost disappointed on pg 16 that the depression data aren't worse.

I'd be willing to consider doing a more thorough review if the authors address these fundamental issues.