Reviewer's report

Title: Burnout and psychiatric morbidity among medical students entering clinical training: a three year prospective questionnaire and interview-based study

Version: 1 Date: 11 January 2007

Reviewer: Olaf Gjerløw Aasland

Reviewer's report:

General

An interesting, elegant and well written paper about an important topic.

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

None

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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)

Data from unadjusted as well as adjusted models are presented, where the findings differ. There should be a discussion on the practical relevance of such findings, and why unadjusted values are important.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What is the practical implication of the fact that 25% of medical students have a clinically significant psychiatric diagnosis?

- what is the situation in other population groups, including practicing doctors (I know that clinical data may be scarce, but it would be interesting with some indications)

- the introductory (p. 4) statement "Whether the demands of medical education or dispositional factors of individuals choosing this career has the greatest explanatory power has sometimes been addressed" is very relevant, and under objectives of the study the authors duly write: "In addition we want to explore the effects of personality traits and the study environment for these outcomes".

However, in my opinion thy fail to discuss the importance of dispositional factors (mainly personality), as opposed to the study environment, for burnout and mental health.

They should also include some information on the demands of medical eduction (work hours etc.).

Finally, should more individual assessments of students admitted to medical school, and/or lower stress levels of the curriculae be addressed in an attempt to reduce psychiatric morbidity, in addition to lowering the threshold for help seeking?

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests