Reviewer’s report

Title: Assessment of an Undergraduate Psychiatry Course in an African Setting

Version: 1 Date: 13 February 2008

Reviewer: Isaac Gukas

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Comments

The paper by Baig et al has addressed an important topical issue about the need for academic faculty assistance from developed countries to less developed ones while assuring global standards and cultural appropriateness in medical education. In reviewing this article, I wish to bring the attention of the authors to the following:

Minor essential Revision

1. Timing of test. It is not clear in the manuscript if the MCQ was administered to the Malawian students in their 3rd year after the first 2 week theoretical teaching or in their 4th year after their second two weeks of lecture. The authors need to make that clear.

Major Compulsory Revisions

2. Ethical approval. In the last paragraph under Methodology, the authors made reference to ethical approval from the University of Edinburgh Committee but were less clear as to whether ethics approval was needed, asked for and received from Malawi. This is important as this study was more about the Malawian students than the Edinburgh ones.

3. Comparison with Edinburgh students. I do not think that we are comparing like for like here. The Malawi students have had only 2 weeks (or 4 weeks if the second period is considered) of lecture and no clinical encounter at all of psychiatry before the test. Meanwhile, the Edinburgh students have had 5 months of encounter which includes lectures, tutorials, and clinical interviewing in 3rd year followed by 6 weeks of clinical attachment in 4th year before the test. The intention of this comparison is good but the methodology is unacceptable. My suggestion is for the authors to remove the comparison with the Edinburgh students as this really adds nothing to the study and the conclusions are misleading. If the authors desire to conduct a comparative study of the performance of Edinburgh students and Malawian students, they must ensure similar learning experience.

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: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

i have no competing interests