Reviewer's report

Title: How residents and interns utilise and perceive the personal digital assistant and UpToDate

Version: 2 Date: 10 April 2008

Reviewer: Alistair W Stewart

Reviewer's report:

Statistical Review

Major Compulsory Revisions

The authors refer to parametric and non-parametric data which is an inappropriate categorisation. The standard divisions of data are into nominal, ordinal and continuous data. The continuous data can take any distribution. The data collected in this study are nominal (the binary yes/no data), ordinal (all the 5 point scale responses) and continuous (the time data). The ordinal data should be reported as median and some form of variation and assessed using non-parametric tests such as the MWU test. The variation could be the 25th and 75th percentile or the 10th and 90th percentile, which ever the authors think gives the reader a sensible view of the data. Reporting means and standard deviations is, generally, not useful for data of this sort. The paired t-test should be replaced by a test appropriate for ordinal data, for example the Wilcoxon signed rank test. The time data is being reported sensibly as the distribution is likely to be highly skewed and so medians and the MWU are appropriate methods.

Discretionary Revisions

Personally I feel that the ‘Score’ columns in tables 2,3 and 4 are redundant (even when the data is presented as a median) and suggest that the authors consider whether they give the reader any further information over the percentages presented in the tables (At present, 3 items of information in these tables, the mean, std dev and percentage, are being used to summarise 5 values from the 5 point scale.)

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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'