Author's response to reviews

Title: International Medical Graduates (IMGs) Needs Assessment Study: Comparison Between Current IMG Trainees and Program Directors

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Author's response to reviews: see over
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BioMed Central Editorial
Email: editorial@biomedcentral.com

RE: MS: 1269568529169866 – International Medical Graduates (IMGs) Needs Assessment Study: Comparison Between Current IMG Trainees and Program Directors

Dear Editors:

Attached you will find our revised manuscript entitled: International Medical Graduates (IMGs) Needs Assessment Study: Comparison Between Current IMG Trainees and Program Directors.

As requested by the editors, below you will find a list of all the comments made regarding this submission and how we addressed each point.

1) Improve writing style
The manuscript has been rewritten and reviewed by an external faculty member who has an extensive list of published articles in peer-review journals (Dr. Brian Hodges, Director of the Wilson Center on Evaluation and Chair of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada Committee on Evaluation.).

2) Ethics
Ethics approval from the University of Toronto’s Research Ethics Board is stated under the heading Recruitment. Informed consent was also stated in the same section.

3) Competing Interests
This new section was created. Authors of this article do not have any financial and non-financial competing interests.

4) Authors’ contributions
This new section was created and contributions of each author is stated

5) Acknowledgements
This had been added.

Comments from Reviewer 1 (Milton Kraemer)

6) Define Horizontal Curriculum
This term is defined under the section, Survey Instrument.

7) Rewrite last sentence in paragraph 1, page 2 and paragraph 2, page 2.
8) Clarify the purpose of this needs assessment study and what the current requirements of IMGs
   This is stated on page 3.

9) Explain why are groups compared and why use a Mann-Whitney
   Initially, the investigators of this study wished to measure the differences in the responses between the
two groups. The finding did not meet the criteria for normality (data was skewed) and hence a non-
parametric test, Mann-Whitney, was performed to test for significance.

   However, the authors believe that the mean rating for each group per challenge is sufficient, especially
since the study was exploratory in nature.

10) Mention the differences between the responses of the groups and why the highest scores were
    chosen to reflect the two groups
    The highest mean scores were reported to contrast the responses of each group. However, this section has
    now been revised to report the highest and lowest mean scores and to highlight differences in mean
    responses by category.

11) Explain why these areas were chosen (i.e. all aspects of Clinical Knowledge and Skills,
    Communication and Working Relations and Macro Issues)
    These challenges were identified by the expert panel of 3 faculty members. These individuals have
    worked extensively with residents, in particular IMGs at the University of Toronto, to help mentor and
    when necessary develop remediation plans for those performing below academic standards.

12) Explain why a comparison was done and report p-values
    As noted in Comment #9, only the mean rating and the corresponding standard deviations are reported.

13) Note that study suggests the depotential usefulness; lower scores and differences do not mean
    topics are not important.
    Although the highest and lowest scores have been reported, the authors have include discussion on each
    category, thereby addressing why there may be differences in the mean ratings between groups as
    opposed to inferring that lower mean scores translate as unimportant.

Comments from Reviewer 2 (Gerald P. Whelan)

14) Confirm the number of Program Directors at the University of Toronto
    The University of Toronto is the largest medical school in Canada. It offers 86 training programs, of
    which 73 are residency programs.

15) Differences in survey instruments for IMGs and Program Directors
    The surveys were designed specifically to address unique challenges posed to each group. For instance,
    Resistance to Training was one topic posed to Program Directors and not to IMGs. For the purpose of
    this study, the authors compared common challenges posed to both groups in order to explore the
    differences in the perception of challenges that IMGs face while in residency training at the University of
    Toronto.
16) Define horizontal curriculum
Please see Comment #6.

17) Clarify the statement that IMGs and Program Directors believe there is a need for additional training.
This conclusion has been rewritten and now states that based on the sample (i.e. IMG residents and Program Directors at the University of Toronto), an orientation program is necessary.

18) Provide discussion on why discrepancies in responses between Program Directors and IMGs exists.
This has been incorporated into the Conclusion and Discussion section.

19) Results cannot be generalized to other institutions or GME outside of Canada.
Such statements have been rewritten to reflect that our findings reflect the perceptions of Program Directors and IMGs training at the University of Toronto.

Comments from Reviewer 3 (Rodney Crutcher)

20) Explain why the second goal of the study (how to develop an orientation program) was not studied; horizontal curriculum has not been tested.
Beyond the scope of this research, and we agree this is a good idea to develop a follow-up study to explore the type of curricular intervention that would best fit the needs of this population.

21) Include survey methodology. Was the survey validated? Was a pilot study performed?
The survey methodology (i.e. development of the survey and recruitment procedures) has been added. The survey has face validity. No pilot study was performed.

22) Why were some questions not asked of both groups?
Please refer to Comment 15.

23) Does not agree with the statement “Both IMGs and Residency Training Program Directors believe that there is a need for a horizontal training curriculum customized for IMGs” – more discussion is needed since this may be a prior belief or assumption.
This has been revised to reflect that both groups felt that an orientation program is required for incoming IMGs at the University of Toronto.

24) The paper assumes that a horizontal curriculum is the best method to address challenges.
The authors acknowledge that there are various ways to address the challenges IMGs face during residency training (i.e. one-on-one mentorship, a series of lectures, etc). However, a standardized curriculum (i.e. horizontal curriculum), is an effective delivery system since its success can be measured against its educational objectives and ensures that all incoming IMGs receive the same treatment regardless of their prior educational background.

25) Take note of spelling errors
These have been corrected.

26) Change title of Table 1
This has been changed to “Mean scores of perception of challenges faced by IMGs among IMG trainees and program directors.”

27) Clarify if there was a section “Other Comments.” If so, was the data analyzed and how. If this was not done or is considered beyond the scope of this paper, this should be stated.
No qualitative data was collected.

28) A comment on the limitations of this paper is necessary.
This has been included after the section Conclusions and Discussion.

29) Display the statistical significance between the two groups differently.
As per Comment # 9, only the mean and standard deviations of each challenge is stated.

30) Ensure references are complete.

31) Note the response rate for both groups as it adds credibility to the study.
This has been noted in the article.

We hope these changes are acceptable to the editors and reviewers of this manuscript. If you have any additional questions, please contact us at your earliest convenience by email.

Thank you again for reconsidering this submission.

Sincerely,

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