Reviewer's report

Title: A generalizability study of the medical judgment vignettes interview to assess students' noncognitive attributes for medical school

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Reviewer: David Taylor

Reviewer's report:

This paper is fascinating, and provides a valuable insight into the validity of a tool which could be an excellent addition to the armoury or techniques which we can use to select candidates for medical school. The value of the paper is that it indicates that there is a tool which does not require multiple judges per station. I particularly liked the use of Kohlberg's theory of moral development to frame the marking of the vignettes.

I have only two comments which the authors might consider.

1) The authors themselves appeared to be the judges in this study. This is appropriate, but it might contribute to the low inter-rater variability. Since the authors have clearly planned the study carefully, and doubtless rehearsed the criteria, they have almost certainly gone through a "norming" process. Consequently it might be surprising if they didn't often agree. The authors might care to address this possible confounder. In my opinion, the study would have been more informative, and applicable more widely, if other judges had been chosen. The authors do address the requirements for training and consistency in the use of the scoring rubric on p.12.

2) My biggest philosophical problem with the study is in the extent to which Kohlberg's theory of moral development is predictive. By this I mean that, although I am confident that the vignettes can give a "snapshot" of the candidate's moral development, I do not personally know the evidence which shows that it develops rather than regresses, or varies randomly over time. I am sure that the authors can reassure the reader.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests