Reviewer’s report

**Title:** Development of a Computer Assisted Learning (CAL) package to raise awareness of autism

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 18 September 2008

**Reviewer:** Julie Hadley

**Reviewer’s report:**

- **Major Compulsory Revisions**

This paper describes the evaluation of a computer assisted learning package for health professionals to raise awareness of autism. There are several major issues which need addressing by the authors before publication:

1) The population for the study is not fully defined. Childcare students in the UK are not on a health professionals’ training programme and on qualification are not health care professionals. More information is required about the level and type of educational programme they are on so that the results of the study can be generalized. Otherwise the authors can not make assumptions regarding the external validity of their research and that the results would also be applicable to all health care professionals and doctors as these are an entirely different population (age, profession and educationally difference).

2) More information is required in the methods section about the intervention and the control. Also has pre-existing knowledge about autism been measured or acknowledged as this will affect the knowledge retention scores.

3) Further clarification is needed regarding the CAL teaching package, does it contain information about symptoms and how to diagnose autism? How long does the CAL package take to watch?

4) How long after the interventions were the questionnaires administered? Was this the same for both groups? Could the authors provide examples of the questions?

Also was the questionnaire previously validated or piloted?

5) Was the person who performed the analysis blinded to the groups allocation?

5) This study has a small sample size, can the authors acknowledge this and its associated problems in the discussion section

- **Minor Essential Revisions**

The author can be trusted to make these. For example, missing labels on figures, the wrong use of a term, spelling mistakes.

1) Quite a few spelling mistakes and grammatical errors noted for example Page 3 2nd paragraph 6th line ‘Even in medical students, they still had incorrect knowledge about autism’
2) I am assuming that the authors are referring to knowledge retention when they refer to retention performance scores, can they please clarify.

- Discretionary Revisions

None

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests