Reviewer's report

Title: Micro-expression recognition training in medical students: a pilot study

Version: 1 Date: 7 May 2009

Reviewer: Larry Gruppen

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Overall, this is an interesting, though limited, study of an aspect of communication skills that has received little attention, viz. facial expression recognition and interpretation. The study design is reasonable for this kind of question and the statistics are handled appropriately. The manuscript is clearly written, for the most part. The training process and materials are novel and may be worth exploring more fully by others. Thus, it is a contribution to the area of teaching and assessing communication skills.

Major compulsory revisions: none

Minor essential revisions: In the Competing Interests disclosure, I would encourage the authors to be explicit about any connections they have with the Paul Ekman Group, which is the commercial dissemination of the microexpressions training materials.

On p. 8, the authors note that the study sample is representative of the original target sample in terms of OSCE scores, but do not report the data. I would encourage them to include these means and standard deviations to aid the reader in making that judgment. It may well be that the 'no difference' finding is a result of the small sample and lack of statistical power.

The authors should include, somewhere in the results section or a table, the actual means and standard deviations of the data. The graphs are useful but not precise enough to reconstruct these parameters.

Discretionary revisions: the authors refer to both a DVD and a CD-ROM for the training vehicle - this should be consistent.

P. 10 The statement: "This shows that the medical students had a higher than average pre-assessment score." should be tempered, changing "shows" to "suggests"

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