Author's response to reviews

Title: Emotional intelligence and perceived stress in healthcare students: a multi-institutional, multi-professional survey

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Summary of revisions:

Reviewer 1: Thank you for the useful comments. There were no required revisions from this review. We agree that a longitudinal study would be useful, though there have been numerous studies in other areas than health care education looking at stability over time. We are interested in whether the original year 1 measures are predictive of problems later, and do plan to follow up the cohort as they progress.

Reviewer 2: Thanks again for identifying some errors in our data reporting. I reran all the analyses from scratch and have made the minor changes that resulted.

“Table 2 needs to be labelled better and explained more thoroughly. For example, what does ‘full sample’ and ‘subset’ refer to? This may be better described as time 1 and time 2 possibly.”

We have added a sentence in the text and reworded the legend for the table to make this clearer. The ‘full sample’ is all students who completed scales at either Time 1 or Time 2. The ‘subset’ is the group that completed all scales at both Time 1 and Time 2 and were the primary group used for analysis.

“The authors need to check the total number completing at time 1 and time 2 and this should tally with the numbers entered in the reliability analysis.”

Checked and altered. The text did have incorrect whole total numbers, but now the reliability analysis coincides with the numbers in the table, as it should have before.

It is not clear why year one students were used, can the authors justify this as stress should increase as the students gain more clinical responsibility.

We have added a sentence explaining that we think it is important to identify students early who may be particularly vulnerable to stress in order to offer support and also we wanted to be able to follow these students as they progress through the course.

The response rate is a problematic

It is, particularly in the Dental students. We have mentioned this in the limitations. The analysis of whole group and subgroup did not show significant differences in reliability of scales between whole group and subgroup.

The demographic data in table 1 are slightly out.

Thank you very much for pointing out these errors in percentages. They have been corrected.

Discretionary revisions:

the aims could be made a little more explicit including the hypotheses being tested.

We have added a couple sentences about the hypothesis that EI may help in coping with stress and that we want to test whether the Schutte measure offers useful information about that area.