Reviewer's report

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

Version: 1 Date: 14 April 2009

Reviewer: Simon Willcock

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Discretionary revision:
1. The authors state that “it would be useful to repeat this study with larger numbers and a variety of student groups”. It would also be useful to do a more longitudinal study measuring data at multiple time points to confirm the hypothesis that EI is a relatively stable trait over time. Emotional Intelligence and perceived Stress in healthcare students:

Reviewers report – Simon Willcock

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?

The questions relating to a) the levels of Emotional Intelligence (EI) and perceived Stress (PS) among students in four health professions and b) evidence that EI may serve as a buffer for stress are both well defined.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?

Methods are appropriate and well described, using established tools to measure EI and PS. The study design has some inherent weakness, in that it measures EI and PS at only two time points in the cohort, one of which the authors acknowledge is likely to be associated with higher examination related stress. Voluntary participation and poor response rate for the second measurement period also weaken the study somewhat, although both issues are clearly acknowledged by the authors.

3. Are the data sound?

The data is relatively simple descriptive and numeric data, and appears to be sound.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?

The manuscript is very well presented. The literature review is comprehensive, well summarised and clearly presented. The authors clearly acknowledge the inherent weaknesses in the study relating to sample size and participation rates, and are careful not to over-interpret the results.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?

Yes, despite the lack of absence of strong correlations in the results, the authors
have undertaken a clear and coherent discussion which reflects the results.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
Yes, see 4 above. The authors state that “it would be useful to repeat this study with larger numbers and a variety of student groups”. It would also be useful to do a more longitudinal study measuring data at multiple time points to confirm the hypothesis that EI is a relatively stable trait over time.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
Yes

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
Yes

9. Is the writing acceptable?
Yes, the writing is of a very high standard.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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.