Reviewer's report

Title: Ethicolegal education based on a survey of postgraduate clinical trainees in Japan

Version: Date: 18 November 2004

Reviewer: atsushi asai

Reviewer's report:

General: Research questions in this paper are interesting and highly relevant in postgraduate medical education in Japan. Because of the reviewer's limited expertise in statistics, the appropriateness of statistical analysis cannot be judged.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

1 p3, l11-12: the author mentioned physician's awareness and ethical thinking ability. I am afraid that both words are used in a vague way. The author needs to explain what they mean in detail. (it holds true for many "awareness" in this paper)

2 p4, The author needs to refer to ethical approval of this research.

3 Additional file 1: Many terminology in the field of clinical medical ethics were used without proper definition. For example, what does "clinical ethics" mean in the questionnaire? In addition, what kind of informed consent process was taken to invite respondents?

4 p5, the author extensively discussed about (A)(B)(C)(D). However, I cannot fully understand what each stands for. For instance, in p6, l6, the author wrote, "Therefore, (A)(B) are more desirable than (C) and (D)", but I am not sure about its meaning. It would be very helpful for the readers if the author explained them in a plain way.

5 l7, under the heading "contents of law case education", it was claimed "I analyzed patient's awareness of physicians" I cannot understand how the author could do so without asking patients directly. Detailed explanation would be appreciated.

6 In Discussion, the author claimed that enhanced awareness equals education. Why the author think so? In addition, in what sense and of what awareness does the author use?

7 p10, the author argued that ethical sensitivity can be mastered through law case education. Because of the significant difference between law and ethics in its very nature, extensive discussion should be added to justify the claim.

8 p11, what does "three-dimensional learning environment" mean? Please explain.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Sometimes, "postoperative" instead of "postgraduate" is used to describe research participants and
the latter should be used consistently.

L7, l1, "I" should be used for "we"

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

None

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

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

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

Statistical review: Yes

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.