Reviewer's report

**Title:** A pre-post test evaluation of the impact of the PELICAN MDT-TME Development Programme on the working lives of colorectal cancer team members

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**Reviewer:** Dag Hofoss

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A pre-post test evaluation of the impact of the PELICAN MDT-TME Development Programme on the working lives of colorectal cancer team members


An interesting paper, which in my opinion may be published practically as is. I list below some minor suggestions for revision, mostly reformulations, which the authors may wish to consider, but do not have to accept.

Procedures are well described, the manuscript presents quite a lot of detail. I must confess I wondered "is it just a bit too long", but, on the other hand, it may be just me.

Page 4, lines 17-18 shook me to the core: the prevalence of psychiatric morbidity among UK cancer doctors was 33 % in 2002 (up from 27 % in 1994)! It probably doesn’t mean 1/3 are mentally ill. The numbers therefore raise the questions “measured by what?” and “compared to …” – this information might be provided.

I assume it reflects the psychiatrists manners of speech, and there is probably no danger of the average reader interpreting it as an alarming number of them are nuts. But I feel that some elaboration may be required.

Reminders were sent 6 and 8 weeks post-course. The authors correctly say this is a short period, and that only immediate results were mapped. Do they happen know exactly when the responses were given (enveloped stamp, email date) – I mean, some responders may wait quite a while before they get down to their questionnaire, they may have got it after 8 weeks, but wait another eight before returning it. (No big deal, I was just curious.)

P 7, sentence # 2 is not an independent sentence: “Most individual items aggregating to eight main sources of job stress (including two sources relating to providing direct patient care) and seven main sources of satisfaction (including
two sources relating to providing direct patient care.

It may help the reader if sentences # 3 and #4 at page 7 were specified: what is meant by “Three job stress items did not aggregate to a main source of job stress”, and “Job stress in relation to these items is included in the calculation of total job stress but is not reported individually”? I assume the sentences refer to a factor analysis, which might have been explained more clearly.

P 7, Team performance, line 4: “…aggregated to give domain scores”. The authors may want to add a few words about which were the domains (of, I assume,) the Aston Team Performance Inventory?

P 8, Statistical Methods, line 5 from bottom: “No adjustment was made for multiple testing”. I assume they did adjust for multiple comparisons (across professional groups, such comparisons appear many times at the following pages). A few additional words may make it clearer what was and what was not adjusted for?

P 8, last paragraph: “… team members’ expectations of the Development Programme were analysed using content analysis techniques”. I see no trace of content analysis techniques in the article. Maybe the authors should delete the mentioning of content analysis techniques?

P 12, paragraph “Adequacy of skills training for effective multidisciplinary teamworking”: I wondered whether the presented percentages are pre-course or post-course figures?

P 13, line 6-8:“The increase in job stress explained a five percent increase in prevalence of estimated psychiatric morbidity among UK hospital consultants over that time period”. Maybe the authors should say how did they measure that, and point the reader to where this result was presented?

P 14, line 9 from top: “…consistent with a study of UK breast cancer teams which suggested teamworking has a positive effect on the mental health of team members[4]”. That may be a bit strong, the start of the sentence is not about “mental health”, just “job satisfaction”.

P14-15: [The MDT coordinators’] “low job stress and low job satisfaction suggests the need to standardise and professionalise their work [21].” Maybe – I am not saying the authors are wrong, I know far too little about the MDT coordinator role. But I may imagine readers mumbling to themselves “or the need to do away with this new and artificially implanted group”. A few words to counter that reaction might not be amiss, words to the effect that “this is an important group because…”?

P 15: “Strengths of this study include the response from almost 60% of team members from a third of all colorectal cancer teams in England to both pre- and post-course questionnaires”. I have two opposite comments. 1) The response rate may not be
quite the strength which the authors feel it is: practically 60% is probably OK, it may even be good, but only if the self-selected non-responders (4 out of 10) introduced no bias. 2) The third of the teams, on the other hand, may be presented as more of a strength than the authors’ formulation implies: the other two thirds did not refuse to respond, they were not part of the study; the authors only studied the teams attending the course in its last year.

P 15: “short timeframe of follow-up …may have led to an underestimation in the gains from participating”. Yes, or maybe an overestimation: sometimes interventions have effects that fade away as the intervention recedes into the distant background.

P 16 “Conclusions”: Well put. Maybe the reader should have been alerted earlier to the point that “The decrease in job satisfaction may be the consequence of being unable to apply these skills immediately in clinical practice because of a lack of required infrastructure and/or equipment” – it sounds reasonable and important, and it may be so reasonable and important that a suspicion to that effect might have been mentioned near the start of the article.

**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