Author's response to reviews

Title: Evaluation of physicians' professional performance: An iterative development and validation study of multisource feedback instruments

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Dr Harold,

We would like to thank you for giving us the opportunity to improve our manuscript titled “Evaluation of physicians’ professional performance: An iterative development and validation study of multisource feedback instruments”. We thank the referees and the editors for their insightful comments. We believe these comments have strengthened the manuscript. Please see below our point-by-point responses to the referees’ comments.

‘Referee 1’
Methods
Referee 1 interpreted that we drew on the FP/GP version of the original MSF instruments. However, we used the medical and surgical instruments. We have explained this in the manuscript.
We have explained our statistical approach to objective 2 and 3 more explicitly
We have referenced our previous work on the reliability formula more clearly as suggested.

Results:
We have made adjustments to all the suggestions made by referee 1 about the results section.

Discussion:
According to the suggestions made by referee 1, we have rewritten the discussion section.

‘Referee 2’
Major compulsory revisions
1. We have rewritten the introduction according to the comments made by referee 3.
2. The IPR issue of the PAR-program is not a problem in this study. The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta is identified as the author and owner and materials are only used for private study and research. According to the website of the PAR program: Extracts of materials may be cited in accordance with national and international copy law provided that the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta is identified as the author and owner thereof.
3. We have included variance components in the article as suggested by referee 3 according to expected reporting standards.
4. We regret the confusion around the issue of possible plagiarism due to a wrong reference. We have, of course, added the right reference to lines 197-200 and mention this as a quote marked verbatim.

Minor essential revisions
• 1&2. We added details about how we handled ‘missing items’ which was equal to ‘unable to evaluate’, where respondents were not able to submit the questionnaire online when not all
items were answered. In the first small pilot, we removed a high number of ‘unable to evaluate’ responses but, in the final study we present here, we indeed used the 15% cut-point to exclude the ‘unable to evaluate’ responses.

- 3. We have added a sentence explaining that although, significant, correlations appeared to be small.
- 4. We agree with referee 3 that nesting can cause other problems and the question is indeed whether this will result in more adequate results. We have adjusted this section. (lines 319-321)
- 5. Line 350-351 is rewritten.

Discretionary revisions
1. Line 345 has been removed
2. We agree with the referee that a reference in line 341 (in the original manuscript, in the revised article line 348) to a recent and interesting article in BMJ might be helpful here for the readers.
3. We have adjusted the term ‘scale’ in the abstract and we replaced it by the term ‘factor’.
4. Considering the length of the article we prefer not to include the analysis within the factors identified.
5. We have provided some more information in the discussion about the differences between specialties. (lines 336-338)

‘Referee 3’
There was indeed a missing reference in line 271 that has now been added.

Once more, thank you for the possibility to resubmit our revisions.

Yours sincerely,

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