Author's response to reviews

Title: "Best" physicians' attributes: the patient's point of view

Authors:

Prof Ami Schattner (amiMD@clalit.org.il)
Dan Rudin (drudin@zahav.co.il)
Navah Jellin (jelin@inter.net.il)

Version: 2 Date: 16 Apr 2004

PDF covering letter
Dear Sir,

Re: “Best physicians’ attributes: the patient’s point of view” – revision

We are grateful to the reviewers for their keen interest in our work and their encouragement. Their criticism and comments helped us enormously to recognize where our manuscript required strengthening. We hope that the enclosed revision provides the clearer picture that we believe we have been able to achieve.

Specifically,

1) We agree that the results might not apply worldwide and state it explicitly both in the abstract (on one of the 2 copies, all changes made are marked in yellow) and on p. 8-9 under ‘limitations’. However, we have no reason to believe that the study population is materially different from other (non-Jewish) Western societies and this is also now stated (Dr. Veatch and Dr. Upshur in their final comments).

2) The process of selection of the 21 items is now clearly described and the patient questionnaire (translated) is appended in full as suggested. We added a patient validation group along the same lines as the first ‘residents’ group and also this was done ‘after-the-fact’, it served to reassure us that patients too understood the essential domain behind each item in the same way as the researchers, their Harvard colleagues (and residents) did. We defined ‘varying in order’ better, we hope (Dr. Upshur), as we did the random selection of the study population (p. 3). All patients were personally handed the questionnaire by one of us. This is probably why 445/450 willingly responded on the spot.

3) The exact questions we posed on inception of the study (study goals) are presented at the end of the ‘Methods’ section (Dr. Upshur’s comment on p.2)

4) We added a discussion of the limitations of our study with reference to the study population and to the methodological problem (referred to particularly by Dr. Veatch). The lead sentence was modified to stress that patients must be informed and have a major role in decisions.
5) We added a paragraph on “why” these results may have been obtained (p.8). Naturally, this explanation is somewhat speculative and the finding in itself is the heart of the matter (Dr. Upshur’s comment).

6) We rechecked the statistical methodology (NJ is an expert on biostatistics and healthcare research) and our conclusions remain solid. We also expanded and clarified our research strategy as requested (end of p.4 under ‘Patients and Methods’ and middle of p.5 under ‘Results’).

7) We have expanded the ‘Discussion’ (Dr. Upshur) and discuss our results more in context with other significant research. Although we cannot cover all important contributions as this is not a review, we added 7 new references and feel that the new discussion is much better now.

We hope that our revision will meet with your full approval and thank you once more for your most valuable input.

Sincerely yours,

Ami Schattner, MD