Reviewer's report

Title: Factors and typologies of general practitioner's preferences, usage and appraisal of educational media - a German perspective

Version: 1 Date: 23 December 2008

Reviewer: Claudio Violato

Reviewer's report:

General Comments

This is an interesting report that provides some empirical evidence for (German) GPs preferences and use of educational media. It is worth publishing but requires some revisions to meet acceptable standards of publication. My suggestions are summarized below.

I find the title not very informative and confusing. Here is an alternative:

General Practitioners' Preferences and Use of Educational Media: A German Perspective

Major Compulsory Revisions

Abstract

1. The statement “In order to combine items with similar content we performed a factor analysis with the survey data” is incorrect. Factor analyses (exploratory as in the present case) are performed for data reduction purposes and determine which variables load on factors and not others. Please correct this statement.

2. “Reliability” – this refers to the scientific or clinical credibility. Since this is a partial psychometric study, the authors should only use the word “reliability” in the technical sense (which they have in the body of the paper – Cronbach’s alpha).

Introduction

3. I would like to see a brief summary of findings from research about physician educational preferences in the US, Canada, Britain, etc.

4. p. 4 – “While the usage…accordingly [15, 16]. This sentence masquerading as a paragraph should be incorporated into the text more deftly than it is.

5. “learning typologies” is used throughout the paper. This research is in no way dealing with learning typologies which is a cognitive construct. This paper deals only with self-reported preferences and use. I would avoid the use of this misleading phrase, “learning typologies”, altogether.

Method
6. “Recruitment and Assessment” should be “Participants”.

7. Of 169 QCs, only 26 (15%) agreed to participate. From these there were potentially 449 respondents but only 264 (about 60%) responded. Therefore, of German GPs identified, only about 9% (15 x .6 = 9) participated. This should be made clearer and the limitations that this has on the present study should be made explicit.

8. A three point scale was used in this study: 0, 1, 2. It is not technically correct to refer to this as a Likert scale, which to be precise, refers to a 5-point attitudinal scale. While this is a minor point, the 3-point is not. Such a scale is too short to optimize the variation especially when one of the points is a true zero. This is probably why the factor analyses resulted in poor solutions (both accounted for less than 50% of the total variance): utilization = 48.7% and requirements = 49.4%. This point should be discussed in the limitation section.

9. Future work with this instrument should improve the scale to make it longer and truly continuous.

10. Why use Mann-Whitney-U and Chi-square with the present data? – Ordinary ANOVA will do. In any case, your results section does not clarify where this is used.

Minor Essential Revisions

11. “measure the correlation” should read “determine the correlation”

12. “typologies” implies a psychological construct when you have not determined this.

13. “study population” should read “sample” (p.10)

14. “which in our opinion” should be eliminated (p. 8)

15. overuse of quotation (“) marks for terms

Discretionary Revisions

The title:

General Practitioners’ Preferences and Use of Educational Media: A German Perspective

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.