Reviewer's report

Title: Competency-based education in the health professions: Implications for improving global health

Version: 1 Date: 15 July 2012

Reviewer: Bonnie Miller

Reviewer's report:

This manuscript is an excellent commentary on the appropriateness of competency-based education (CBE) for guiding health professions education in resource poor settings. The authors very clearly define CBE and articulate the differences between CBE and traditional curricula. This clarity will be helpful for readers in both resource rich and resource poor settings. It is generally very well written, and needs only minor copy-editing.

My only suggestion is for the authors to better outline some of the challenges inherent in developing competency-based programs. These include definition of expected achievements at the various levels and phases of training that would guide transitions; the creation of robust assessment systems and the critically important faculty development programs that teach the teachers how to use them; and documentation systems that capture learner achievements, which become even more important as the program becomes more individualized. These all require CBE expertise, an enlightened and determined educational leadership, and an open-minded faculty. These are often hard to come by in resource rich settings, let alone resource poor settings. This may require that education leaders in the developed world work alongside those in the developing world, as a new system of learning is co-created. The lack of adequate faculty numbers in some resource poor settings is an obstacle that should not be under-estimated and I think that manuscript would be stronger if these challenges are more clearly acknowledged.

Figure 2 seems very similar to a figure in the Lancet article (Frenk et al) that is referenced in this manuscript. I would suggest citing this in the figure.

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

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.