Reviewer’s report

Title: A survey on beliefs and attitudes of trainee surgeons towards placebo

Version: 0 Date: 14 Dec 2015

Reviewer: Melody Zhifang Ni

Reviewer's report:

Background

* Second sentence starting technological advances… contains two separate sentences

* Reference for the statement made in the last sentence needed, the issue of true efficacy …

* Within the third paragraph 'the role of placebo…'. Explain more clearly why it is important to understand the clinical implications of why surgeon's attitude towards placebo effect is important.

Same paragraph the survey:

* Are the surgeons being surveyed orthopaedics consultants?

* Explain why in the context of this study a survey of trainee surgeons is important before stating the aim

Methods

* Missing statistical methods authors used to compare the differences (chi-squared test)

Results

* Views of 'consultants' were referred to repeatedly - clarify what this means. Are these the same as cited in the introduction? Also include statistical method to test whether there is a significant difference

* Regression analysis was used to test whether willingness to recruit depended on other factors - these were not reported in page 9
Overall it is an interesting study although at times I found difficult to follow. For instance, findings cited in the abstract were not directly quoted in the Results. Would help if authors could organise the manuscript such that the sections in the Methods matched the sections in the Results.

The main drawback of this study was the high percentage of trainees who did not respond to the survey (>80%). This casts doubt on the external validity of the survey, especially as the authors argued the previous survey was biased. It is not reasonable to assume, as the authors had argued, that the respondents were representative based on the male/female split alone. There are clues indicating otherwise, e.g. a percentage with post-graduate degrees, high concentration of trainees in later years of training, etc.

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**

If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Does the work include the necessary controls?**

If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

No

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?**

If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

No

**Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?**

If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I am able to assess the statistics

**Quality of written English**

Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable
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