Reviewer's report

Title: Simulated learning in musculoskeletal assessment and rehabilitation education: Exploring its benefits on skills and confidence development, as well as motivation for future learning

Version: 3 Date: 18 August 2014

Reviewer: Hans Martin Bosse

Reviewer's report:

Well performed study with a precise research question limited to a small but specific aspect of medical training (peer vs. SP) in one well defined topic (musculoskeletal assessment and rehabilitation). The design is good in offering a triangulation looking at the results from various angles including qualitative data from participants and actors.

Major compulsory revisions

1 There is some control for confounders (two groups with comparable results in the pre-test). As the major outcome was the clinical skill this should have been the measure as base to randomize (not to merely allocate) the participants and would have meant to perform a practical assessment prior to the randomization and intervention. This needs to be addressed in the limitations section. Please also give information on gender and age in both groups.

2 Major drawback is the assessment of clinical skills with the same method of training. All students should have been assessed with one method, ideally with SPs. Now there remains a doubt whether the difference in clinical skills may be attributed to the difference in the assessment tool itself; i.e. lack of seriousness when being examined assessing a peer, or other aspects.

3 It is a pity no qualitative data on peers as actors were collected. There are more data than discussed on this issue – comparing SP and peer training. These should be included.

4 Results: table 4: “Clinical skills self-confidence - Peer-patient - Standardised patient” etc. are included twice with different data. Probably pre and post results are mean but not indicated as such.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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.