Reviewer's report

Title: Medical professionalism in the formal curriculum: 5th year medical students' experiences.

Version: 1 Date: 11 August 2014

Reviewer: David Cox

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

1) Methodology: In general this is a sound piece of work with appropriate methodological rationale entrenched in the theory. I think it is necessary to justify why focus groups particularly were chosen over other methods such as one-to-one interviews. Each may have had their advantages but the authors should make clear their decision process in selecting this as a method.

2) Limitations: Related to comment 1 is the limitation that the students were interviewed alongside their peers, which may have influenced their responses in addition to the interviewer reflexivity already identified. This limitation should also be identified and its implications acknowledged (briefly).

3) Limitations: Another limitation that should be addressed is the very specific context of the Bristol curriculum that this study has taken place, and how the reader can apply the interpretation of these data to different students in different institutions with different curricula.

4) Discussion: Overall, the analysis is too descriptive, and there are instances where it lacks depth. Specifically, for example, the paragraph beginning at Line 364 describes some of the data, relates it to the literature, but fails to make that extra interpretive step, considering why students feel it is not relevant, why they were irritated and what this means for the phenomenon. The first paragraph of the Discussion (from line 341) displays interpretivism closer to that of what I would expect from IPA. I believe this paper would be much more analytically sound if the authors returned to their discussion and added more interpretive depth throughout. Quotes from the literature should be used to support interpretation of their data, rather than simply describe it further.

5) A statement needs to be made suggesting what this study adds to the existing literature.

Minor Essential Revisions

1) Line 21: "Tomorrow's Doctor" should be pluralised

2) Notation of the focus group quotations is inconsistent: Line 167 states "Male 1, Group 3" while other quotes only use "Group x"
Discretionary Revisions

1) Some exploration of the idea of conscious/unconscious incompetence in the approach to interpretation of students' comments, especially those who see the curriculum as "not relevant" would be interesting but perhaps beyond the scope of this paper.

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

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