Reviewer's report

Title: The social validity of a national assessment centre for selection into general practice training.

Version: 3 Date: 8 August 2014

Reviewer: Saleem Razack

Reviewer's report:

1) This study addresses a point of interest and relevance to the medical education audience. Using social validity theory as the framework the authors have looked at a national psychometric assessment strategy for selection into general practice from the perspective of the applicants, recognizing that much literature has focused on the perspectives of the institutions doing the selecting.

2) My overall recommendation is that this article contains information worthy of publishing, but there are several clarity/methodological issues that must be addressed first. I thus overall recommend "a revise and resubmit" for the article.

3) Major compulsory revision 1: Comparing the title to the conclusions, I don't see a full match. The title refers to the social validy of a national assessment, but in the conclusions, I see the authors comment extensively on the usefulness of social validity theory to their research. Were they studying the usefulness of social validity theory to assess the social validity of the national assessment or making a judgment on the social validity of the national assessment strategy using social validity theory. I think they must make a choice, and while the second point would be ok to discuss, the point of the study must be the major focus of the conclusions. I believe they must answer the question, using social validity theory, what evidence do they have from their study that the national assessment strategy is valid from the point of view of the candidates?

4) This is related to 3), but I had trouble figuring out exactly what their research question was. I suggest it be clearly stated.

5) There should be a better justification of the decision to use social validity theory. What other choices are there out there?

6) Organizational justice is a jargony term that should be defined.

7) Description of MMI marking schema and interviewer training, while providing extremely useful contextual information, does not link well to the goal of social validity. How do the marking schema, blueprint, and training explicitly address social validity?

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:

No competing interests