Reviewer's report

Title: Cross-validation of MRCGP and MRCP(UK): a database linkage study of 2,284 candidates taking both assessments

Version: 2
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Reviewer: Richard Hays

Reviewer's report:

I read this paper with interest but was soon disappointed. By the end it reads like a psychometrician's dream - I think that the statistics are fine (but am not a statistician) and the results are interesting, but I am not sure just what they mean and how they fit into medical education. The interesting parts for me are that 1. knowledge performance predicts knowledge performance. This is hardly either new or surprising, but I do understand that the validity of particularly the MRCGP examination may be deemed more valid by such an analysis (as a non UK person I do not understand why the initial MRCP examination is done by so many people as it does not confer any particular advantage). 2. the new CSA may be more valid than the old CSA, although the reliability is still a little disappointing.

I found the extensive results and discussion about ethnicity to be distracting. This dominates the paper although is not mentioned in the title or the abstract. Indeed I wonder if there is a separate paper somehow pasted into the middle of this one?

The risk of the approach taken is that the paper reads like a statistician's fishing expedition - great numbers, but poorly related to the context.

Mandatory modifications: The authors should make clear just what the paper is about (its purpose) and present the results and discussion relevant to the purpose.

Apart from that it is well written and clear, although perhaps a bit dense at times when focusing on the numbers.

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests