Author's response to reviews

Title: Making Medical Student Course Evaluations Meaningful: Implementation of an Intensive Course Review Protocol

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear BMC Medical Education Editorial Team:

Thank you for the opportunity to revise our manuscript. We have addressed the reviewers comments in point form below with changes highlighted in red. In addition, we have completed some minor grammatical improvements.

Reviewer 1 (Ian Purddy)

We thank reviewer 2 for his current and past comments that have been valuable in enhancing our manuscript.

Reviewer 2 (Mike Tweed):

“The most important is variation in respondents introduced by cohort variation and diminishing response rate. Although this is mentioned in the discussion, some further analysis may help with this, although it may not be possible.”

We have expanded our discussion point on cohort variation. We have also added an additional sentence relating to our consistent admission criteria across the study period as it relates to response rates. Unfortunately because student feedback is anonymous we do not have access to sociodemographic information for respondents and cannot complete an analysis of respondents vs. non-respondents (discussion section, page 8-9, line 193-198)

“The second is regression to a mean. Although the median of all courses increasing would support this not being the case, this could be highlighted.”

We have added a comprehensive discussion on regression to the mean bias in our limitations section (Discussion section, page 9, line 216-223).

“The title of Table 1 should be "Median" not "Mean".

We have changed the title to “median” (see table 1).

“If possible some discussion of the 3 course where no improvement was noted”

Unfortunately, given the small number of courses below the benchmark, adding further discussion may individually identify those courses and breach confidentiality. We regret we cannot provide detailed comments on those three courses.

Reviewer 3 (Joy Rudland).
“Why is the intensive course protocol triggered just by student course evaluation as opposed to other criteria indicated of importance by PESC, e.g. standardised examination results that are mentioned in the introduction?”

An intensive course review is typically triggered by student feedback scores. However, a critical course incident is also a part of our process. These can include chronic course issues. They can also include poor results on local or national standardized exams. We have added further clarification on this point (Intensive Course section, page 5, line 117-118)

We thank reviewer 3 for her comments. We disagree that our approach overemphasises student feedback only. As described in our paper (lines 91-99), our evaluation committee examines a wide range of qualitative and quantitative data and considers input from multiple stakeholders (both student and faculty) at many levels. We describe an important component of our approach. The intensive course review is an additional layer of quality assurance.

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Thank you for reviewing this manuscript. We hope we have adequately addressed all of the reviewers’ concerns and look forward to any further comments.

Sincerely,

Patrick Fleming, MD, MSc