Reviewer's report

Title: The surgical experience of current non-surgeons gained at medical school: a survey analysis with implications for teaching today’s clerks

Version: 4  Date: 30 June 2015

Reviewer: Hazim Sadideen

Reviewer's report:

Well done to the authors on improving this further. Overall it reads much better, and the title finally looks right :)

A few comments that need to be addressed please

Major:

1) Abstract L1: The first sentence must be changed. This stems back to the comments we made earlier. If the authors are adamant that surgical education is poorly rated amongst students, then this sentence should be rephrased to: "In Germany, medical students are unsatisfied with their surgical education curricula" as this is not an international or known phenomenon. If they are unable to firmly state this, then they can make this statement "It is unknown what aspects of undergraduate surgical curricula are useful for future non-surgeons" Improvements can be achieved by... etc etc

2) L87: I would advise you to remove "suspected that they would not be able to differentiate whether an experience was gained at the end of medical school or at the start of professional training". You cannot suspect that, unless your data suggests that. Some people have vivid recollections and can tell you exactly what experiences in med school aspired them to become surgeons, and single important qualities that they recall till this day.

Or you may wish to transfer this section to the limitations section, and mention you did not include them. Their views may have enriched your data set, (because if you know what in fact they found useful, this may be good to incorporate into current curricula). Of course that is a separate study to explore, which is beyond the scope of this paper. But it is important to show that you have thought about it and that it could alter conclusions.

Of note L258 states there was no difference in recollection of non surgeons (i.e. they could all recall well); so it cannot be suspected that the surgeons wouldn't have been able to recall med school vs early career.

Minor:

1) L43: Please change to: an online questionnaire using open ended questions (as opposed to open answers)
2) L54: Please include the word "undergraduate"

3) L63: Good to see a reference here. See 1st comment above re: abstract.

4) L76: an online (not on)

5) L78: comma after endures (not clerkship)

6) L118: remove "at"

7) L137/146/163 etc: Replace 67 with Sixty seven (best to avoid starting a sentence with numbers) etc

8) L318: include "from their undergraduate studies"

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