Reviewer’s report

Title: How medical teachers use narratives in lectures: a qualitative study

Version: 0 Date: 07 Sep 2015

Reviewer: Somashekhar Nimbalkar

Reviewer's report:

It was a pleasure to review the article. It needs a few changes that I am describing below.

The background is written with a focus on displaying the importance of narrative learning in medicine. The research is focused on how narratives are used by lecturers and students in the teaching learning process. Hence the reviewer suggests that the background be restructured to reflect the goal of the study. The author may make his point about the importance of the narrative in teaching learning process with 1-2 paragraphs and utilize the rest of the paragraphs in background to shed light on lecturers and learners and how often they use the narrative in learning. To be fair, there are a few examples already but there needs to be a better case made for usage of narrative in basic clinical sciences. The author may consider including research which shows that students in these situations learn better by narratives and hence justify the need for narrative based teaching in basic sciences. It may also be pertinent to reference studies across the globe rather than only UK based literature.

Methods: This is a well written section. However I didn't find a focus group guide or a set of questions that were made for in-depth interviews. Also how were these questions decided? Were they based on previous work or on literature review? It may also be interesting to find out how many students were invited and how many agreed to come for the focus group discussion. If the invitation described the goal of the FGD in terms of narrative, it is possible that those students who were interested in narratives where signed up for the FGD and hence the results would be extremely biased. It is extremely pertinent for the reader to understand the process of invitation and informed consent to rule out seeing a selection bias.

Results are written in a lucid manner.

Discussion needs to be more elaborative.

The author sets out to identify various parts of the learning process. But it does not find much place in the discussion which is mainly focused on the memory aspect of learning process.
Meaning-making is an important part which is described well in results but needs more attention in discussion. How can it be improved by narratives? What was done in the interactions to find out more about these learning processes?

The author has the opportunity to discuss various themes and learning process. He may also venture to discuss how including the narrative process can strengthen the learning process and if there are other studies that have demonstrated this. It may also be pertinent to discuss what obstacles need to be overcome or what initiatives and/or incentives need to be undertaken, so that lecturers are enticed to include more narrative based teaching in their lectures. Will it require a major upheaval of training of lecturers or will it require workshops and training courses for them. Since the manuscript discusses the use of narratives by lecturers on a positive note, it becomes necessary to suggest steps to improve its use.

The conclusion that "Greater awareness by lecturers of the range of possible narrative types, and the nuanced differences in the messages that each type conveys may augment the benefits of using narratives in lectures" is not based on any evidence or results of the study.

Overall the manuscript achieves what it set out to do, but there is scope for further improvement (there always is!) and it would be a pleasure to read the manuscript again if these changes are made.

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**

If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Does the work include the necessary controls?**

If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

No

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?**

If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

No

**Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?**

If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

Not relevant to this manuscript
Quality of written English

Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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