Reviewer’s report

Title: Vertically integrated medical education and the readiness for practice of graduates

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Reviewer: Simon Watmough

Reviewer’s report:

I do think the authors have tried an interesting study here in a worthwhile area - it is essential for all of us to know whether one curriculum or another could better prepare graduates to work as doctors. However, I do have a number of doubts about the paper which I have listed below which I would file under major compulsory revisions.

Abstracts

The results and conclusion should be re written, they don’t really give the reader a clear summary of any take home messages from the paper.

Introduction

Sets the scene for the paper fairly well, but does have some areas for improvement/clarification.

The paper would benefit from saying why the specific research questions i.e. unfamiliar clinical situations was chosen.

There is an error, though saying reference 9 is a questionnaire based study.

It is not clear at all what the final paragraph in the introduction is trying to say and what its purpose is.

Methods

Much more is needed in the method about what the readiness tool is and its development and about how the standardized patients were chosen and what their conditions etc were etc? How were the distracting tasks arranged/decided upon and what exactly were they? Who are the supervisors exactly? Were they all debriefed about this/taught how to be involved in this research?

Participants – why those students? Exactly how were they recruited , what percentage of the cohorts were these numbers?

Results

Some of the results i.e. looking at the different scoring groups from the two different countries should have been in the methods section in the relevant part about the statistical tests. The results though are clearly presented overall.

Discussion
Again, not all of those papers referenced are questionnaire studies – and there are now more recent papers published which look at reasons for preparedness for practice and these should be included in the discussion. The number of students is very small and this isn’t adequately discussed in the limitations, neither is the voluntary nature of the project. Why did those who signed up take part? I know it is discussed in the limitations the fact the students are from different countries, tied in with the small numbers involved does concern me. Also, the take home message in the discussion for other medical educators doesn’t to me seem to be very clear. It seems to be more about the methods used than the results - it seems to say that this doesn’t add to the literature about VI curricula and preparedness for practice but other studies do.

Conclusion
Doesn’t really give a “take home message” – it suggest the tools works but not that the study has itself has given us any firm conclusions. The aim of the paper isn't about the tool but about the results of the research aren't they?

Overall, there is a lot of use of the words “we” and “our” etc, these would be better written in the third person in a scientific article.

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

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published.

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'