Author’s response to reviews

Title: The Effect of Patient Death on Medical Students in the Emergency Department.

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The following has been added to the aims of the study to explain further the rationale behind the research question: We hypothesize that deaths in the ED may produce different reactions in students than deaths in the inpatient setting based on several factors that distinguish the ED: more cases of trauma, patients could include the young and previously healthy, generally shorter interactions with patients and their families, as well as the ED’s quick and fast-paced environment, which may provide less opportunity to reflect on a patient death. The unique effects of patient death in the ED are potentially better understood when contrasted with the inpatient setting.

The following has been added to the methods section to explain further the theoretical framework for the analysis: Grounded theory is a method of identifying analytical themes as they emerge from the data (Pope, Ziebland, and Mays, 2000) and then constructing theories that are grounded in the data itself (Charmas, 2006). Unlike the traditional model of research in which the researcher determines whether or not the theory applies to the phenomenon under study after collecting the data, grounded theory is a systematic methodology of theory built upon the categories generated by reviewing and coding the collected data (Allan, 2003). When applying this theory, the hypotheses are not formulated prior to collecting data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and the analyst continuously compares the themes as the theory emerges (Glaser, 1965). The grounded theory method is implemented in 4 steps: 1) verbatim read-through of every transcript
2) pinpointing potential themes 3) comparing themes, and lastly 4) constructing a theoretical framework (Bernard and Ryan, 1998).

Revised themes: The themes have been combined into 4: context of death, interaction with patient and family, assessment of medical team, psychological consequences and coping mechanisms.