Reviewer’s report

Title: Impact of a narrative medicine programme on healthcare providers' empathy scores over time

Version: 0 Date: 05 Nov 2016

Reviewer: Iris Schleicher

Reviewer's report:

The study describes the influence of a voluntary narrative medicine competition programme on progression of empathy

Introduction

The importance of empathy in clinical practice is underlined.

A short description of teaching programmes other than the narrative medicine programme would be interesting.

Methods

The participants are of different health care professions, which is nevertheless a inhomogeneous group.

The number of females is much higher than that of males, which is significant for the statistical comparison.

A control group without intervention is missing.

It is unclear how the decision was made for participating in single or team group.

It would be valuable to include an example of a narrative case for the single and/or for the team group.

Maybe add the JPE score as supplement?
Results

142 participants were noted but even before the intervention only 110 are scored. What happened to the other 32?

Female and male group are of quite different numbers, therefore statistical comparison should be made with limitation. The same applies to the numbers of the seniority groups.

Discussion

The authors mention studies about loss of empathy during clinical work. It seems rather difficult to compare studies, which involve either medical students or doctors to the rather inhomogeneous group of different health care workers.

Different group numbers between female and male participants and groups of seniorities are important to mention in the discussion.

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No

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.

I recommend additional statistical review
Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

Declaration of competing interests
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?

If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

I declare that I have no competing interests

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal