Reviewer's report

Title: Self-reported needs for improving the supervision competence of PhD supervisors from the medical sciences in Denmark

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Reviewer: GINA WISKER

Reviewer's report:

Medical PhD Supervisors' needs and wishes for improved competences - Development of a new programme in supervision of PhD students within Health Sciences. A qualitative study.

This is a perfectly straightforward study which surveyed supervisors in Copenhagen to identify their learning needs as supervisors and produced a range of needs including leadership, mentoring etc. There has been a great deal written about the development of supervisors and I recommend that the authors look at Soren Smedegaard Bengtsen's synthesis of work on supervision and supervision development (2014), he is in Denmark also at Aarhus - this is needed because there is a very thin range of references to the supervision literature - Lee, Denicolo, Taylor, Manathunga and not enough attention has really been paid yet to the range of work in Australasia and the UK on supervision development, all of which would have helped to contextualise this work further. The main contribution to this literature should surely be the difference, the extra issues for clinical PhD supervision which the authors recognise require additional competences, and I suggest that this too is expanded and further located in the literature about clinical PhD supervision (there is very little of that) so that the article can make a contribution to knowledge in this particular corner of the field while also backing up the needs of supervisors. This survey, in itself could be further used to add to the literature if it has findings which are not already widely known about the needs of supervision development courses. I suggest also that the authors consider the established supervision course at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden run at PIL (much information online) since it offers many of the contents and outcomes they survey the supervisors to discover, and also includes many clinical supervisors in the midst of the participants.

The realisation that there are disciplinary differences is important and this paper could indeed offer insights into the needs of medical PhD supervisors but at the moment it focusses too much on the rather general issues which they, as well as other supervisors, comment on e.g. needing to know institutional regulations. The interview data needs to be handled with more integration of the theory of, for instance, leadership, identity and resilience to situate the comments made in these theoretical frameworks otherwise they remain a list of categories with examples. The quotations need to be cut back so that those used, developed from an analysis from the interviews (and we need to know how they were analysed) further the argument and main points more clearly.
One of the main comments in the abstract is the need for special disciplinary developments for medical PhD supervisors, and more analysis of the interviews is needed to perhaps clarify or extend those areas of the contribution of the research.

I look forward to seeing it enhanced, clarified and revised.

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.

Unable to assess

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
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Not relevant to this manuscript

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