Reviewer’s report

Title: Changes in patient-centered attitude and confidence in communicating with patients: A longitudinal study of resident physicians

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Reviewer: Nicky Hudson

Reviewer’s report:

This is well-written simple prospective longitudinal study building on the literature from studies with medical students, and follows resident physicians for one year. Longer term follow up would be interesting, and maybe for comment in the discussion on future directions. The data comes from self-report by the participating residents, but the two instruments are valuable in different ways. The PPOS scale is a previously validated instrument, including in the Japanese context. The PCMI scale had been previously been used in a pilot study in the Japanese context, and it is based on a framework of behaviours recommended by the universally used and evidence-based Calgary-Cambridge Communication model.

Title and abstract: these reflect the content of the article.

Introduction: This sets the scene for the work. The hypotheses are exactly as found in the results. A reader may questions this, especially hypothesis 3 that the physician confidence in communicating with patients would be greater for those who demonstrated a smaller decline in patient-centred attitude. Given this close correlation, I think that the introduction should provide more evidence to support this hypothesis.

Method: A notable issue in this section is the drop in participant numbers from T1 to T2, such that the final response rate was 46.6%. The authors advised that participants each received an Amazon gift certificate in return for participation. It is not clear if this was given at T1 to all participants, or only to those who completed both the T1 and T2 surveys. If it was the latter, this may have improved the final participation rate at T2 and perhaps the authors should clarify this when discussing the limitations of their work.

Results: Illustrated in tabular form with some supportive narrative, and the essence of the findings is given in the abstract.

Discussion: The findings are discussed in relation to the relevant literature, although there is less on this topic for residents than for medical students. Thus the study would be of interest to postgraduate clinical educators.

The limitations of the effect of the response rate at T2 perhaps deserve further discussion on the effects on the findings. Also some reflection on the effect of specialty orientation on the results--the groups weren’t large enough for significant differences between each group of 'specialty orientation' residents, it would be useful to consider this and potential for assessing a larger
group of residents from other settings, which are not so weighted towards internal and surgical (e.g. what about general practitioner orientation where clinicians have continuity of care experiences). Some discussion on the challenges of being a resident and how it may have impacted on the decline in patient-centred attitudes observed could also be useful. With the pressure of resident workload, the need to impress supervisors and compete for specialty training positions etc, may have also had an effect. There is less time to be patient-centred in a pressure clinical environment? Are the role models discussed, the best ones to develop patient-centred attitudes or is the 'system' responsible for the decline, rather than the residents? I think readers would be interested in the Japanese residency context and any potential influences on the results.

Ethics: Approval obtained, and study number given.

**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.

Yes

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

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