Reviewer’s report

Title: Medical Education Today: All That Glitters Is Not Gold

Version: 0 Date: 04 Mar 2019

Reviewer: Lawrence Loo

Reviewer's report:

I found this "Debate" perspective valuable and thought provoking, whether one agrees or not with the general view proposed by the author and the supporting arguments. Many medical schools are considering or undergoing major revisions of the curriculum and the author warns about "unintended and potentially detrimental long-term" consequences from shifting from a two-pillar systems (basic sciences and clinical sciences) to adding a third pillar ("Health Systems Science").


On page 8, line 7: I believe the statement "Also, movement to partial of complete grade-free system has not proven to reduce stress and burnout" is not correct and should be amended. See author's citation #54 and Wasson LT, Cusmano A, Meli L, Louh I, Falzon L, Hampsey M, Young G, Shaffer J, Davidson KW. Association Between Learning Environment Interventions and Medical Student Well-being: A Systematic Review. JAMA. 2016 Dec 6;316 (21):2237-2252.


In Section B8: Impact on Pathology, page 10, line 12 -19. "Boot camps" for incoming resident trainees are not unique to pathology programs but occur across a broad spectrum of residency programs including neurosurgery, pediatrics, family medicine, medicine, general surgery, otolaryngology, etc. Might the author's viewpoint that the current changes in the preclinical curriculum and unintended consequences be strengthened by being more inclusive?

In Section B10: Complexities and Proposed Solutions, page 11. Could the author expand or propose additional solutions for his first barrier to curricular reform: "Curriculum revision must take place within a certain time frame, making it a zero-sum game." Other than "restoration of subject-based course, including a pathology course," are there other suggestions how a blended learning approach (reference #99) or an integrated curriculum (reference #22) can incorporate the third pillar ("Health Systems Science") in today's modern curriculum? As a member of our school of medicine's curriculum committee, I am constantly challenged in trying how best to balance the zero-sum game.

A major strength of this article is the extensive bibliography that can be a valuable resource for those interested in reading more on the viewpoint and supporting arguments of the author, whether one agrees or disagrees with the position taken.

As a minor point, the bibliography has an inconsistent format and some of the citations are incomplete or have redundant information. For example, references in need of update include: #20 (missing the volume); #33 (missing page numbers); #44 (page 18, line 11-12, the phrase "Competency-Based, Time-Variable Education in the Health Professions" is inserted between the volume and pages); #59 (should read "European Psychiatry" since there's also another journal "European Psychologist"); #64 (missing volume and pages); #97 (missing volume); and #106 (add URL and date accessed). Finally, on page 30, between references #66 and #67 (line 12), a partial journal citation is provided but not used in the main text of the manuscript and should be removed.
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?
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Unable to assess

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

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Not relevant to this manuscript

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