Reviewer’s report

Title: Student progress decision-making in programmatic assessment: can we extrapolate from clinical decision-making and jury decision-making?

Version: 0 Date: 23 Nov 2018

Reviewer: Wendy Hu

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this manuscript. The topic is both of great current interest to the medical education community as well as being the subject of my doctoral and ongoing research (Interdisciplinary approaches to risk and uncertainty, especially as they apply to professional judgements and decision making) and educational work (e.g. qualitative and quantitative data synthesis and integration in qualitative, mixed methods and multimethod research) Detailed comments as well as overall comments have been made in the attached annotated manuscript.

One of the key strengths is the exploration of ideas from fields other than usually cited in medical education and the extensive number of citations listed. As an invited commentary, methodological rigour may be less important than for an empirical study. However, I would like to have seen some critical appraisal of the literature and research cited so that the limitations, as well as more reference to the "classic" or primary literature from the disciplines being cited. For example social psychology literature has cited to support analogy with decision making by juries, rather than from law. Another example is heuristics and biases from selected medical literature rather than from the originators of the field such as Tversky, Kahneman, Slovic etc (all psychologists). Some of the analogies could be better supported by stronger arguments. Recommend also making it clearer at the outset the the range of decisions in programmatic assessment and that this review only covers high stakes progression decisions and how these are often made in medical schools. Suggestions for these are included in the comments.

In summary it could be a useful addition to the ongoing debates about assessment decision making, but could more clearly lay the foundations for further work to be done. In some ways it could have been a more satisfying read if only one analogy (eg clinical decisions, heuristics and biases and lessons from the extensive literature there OR legal decisions and judgments) had been made and explored in greater depth with more critical analysis. Thank you again for the opportunity to review and make suggestions for improvement.
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.

Unable to assess

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
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No

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