Reviewer’s report

Title: Relationship between students’ perceptions of the adequacy of M1 and M2 curricula and their performance on USMLE Step 1 examination

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Reviewer: Scott Border

Reviewer's report:

This article will be of interest to the readership of the journal. Curriculum revalidations and alignment of assessment are key topics in medical education and as such this work aims to use student perception feedback to inform improvements in these areas. The results are not particularly surprising and so it does not add a great deal of new knowledge to the field. There are a few important considerations for the authors:

* The title is a little clumsy - consider revising. Is this a statement or a question?

* The manuscript would benefit from a brief history of curriculum enhancement in the US (trends including some reference to causality e.g. social and political contexts)

* I am a little confused by the nature of the 'association between attitudes and performance' How was the criteria devised to determine under performance and why was this method chosen? It is not a statistical association as such but that is what readers will be expecting. I feel that the aspect of aligning attitudes to performance has been somewhat mis-sold in the article. It states in the abstract that student perceptions are compared to their performance, but this is not really true. The reader only has a vague appreciation of performance based on the data provided.

* Although the authors describe the limitations of how obtaining timely feedback is useful, yet difficult to gather, the limitations of their own study are not included.

* The authors should consider including literature on the benefits of working with students as partners in curriculum development and enhancement and this should be imbedded within the current literature as a means to implement change

* The conclusions are reasonable and I agree that it is useful to use student attitudes to drive reform, but it should also be explained that others reasons can account for performance. What variability can be expected in the M1 and M2 over time and what is the process by which the assessments are compiled (?), is there a national syllabus in any of these core driplines or in pre-clinical medicine more broadly?
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?
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:

Needs some language corrections before being published

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