Author’s response to reviews

Title: Medical Students’ Perception on Fecal Microbiota Transplantation

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Editor Comments:

1. Please confirm whether informed consent, written or verbal, was obtained from all participants and clearly state this in the 'Ethics and consent to participate' declaration. If verbal, please state the reason and whether the ethics committee approved this procedure. If the need for consent was waived by an IRB or is deemed unnecessary according to national regulations, please clearly state this, including the name of the IRB or a reference to the relevant legislation.

RESPONSE: we have clarified this.

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Reviewer reports:

Phillippa Poole (Reviewer 1):

Thank you for the opportunity to review this well-written paper. As a physician, I found it a really good scientific review of Faecal Microbiota Transplantation (FMT), although it was interesting that the authors did not mention the issue of production and a quality supply of FMT material as a barrier i.e to whom do you turn if you are requesting this for your patient. Maybe that is better sorted out in Romania than in my country.
RESPONSE: we have briefly addressed this in the revision.

However, this paper has been submitted to a medical education journal. As such there needs to be a much better balance between the scientific/clinical and the educational aspects.

The paper would benefit from more in the introduction and discussion of how this study adds to the medical education literature, particularly the rationale for doing the survey and what would be done with the results in an educational sense.

Some of the thoughts that came to mind were:

- A FMT is a specialist procedure - what is reasonable for medical students to know compared with interns and specialist trainees?

- It was very surprising to me just how much the students actually knew about such a new and specialised procedure. It was stated this was in the absence of formal teaching yet students reported they had learned from courses. Is this a case of curriculum overlap of which the authors are unaware? It may also represent an example of how new and exciting treatments are incorporated into programmes.

- This is an example of a new medical technology, so one message might be how medical students learn about new technologies.

RESPONSE: we have briefly addressed this in the revision.

What was the time period between students being invited to do the survey and actually doing it? Might they have gone and looked up information on FMT?

RESPONSE: as we did not control for this, the possibility that they might have looked up information on FMT exists.

Reviewer 2 (Reviewer 2): PEER REVIEWER ASSESSMENTS:

OBJECTIVE - Full research articles: is there a clear objective that addresses a testable research question(s) (brief or other article types: is there a clear objective)?

Yes - there is a clear objective
DESIGN - Is the current approach (including controls and analysis protocols) appropriate for the objective?

No - there are minor issues

EXECUTION - Are the experiments and analyses performed with technical rigor to allow confidence in the results?

Yes - experiments and analyses were performed appropriately

STATISTICS - Is the use of statistics in the manuscript appropriate?

Yes - appropriate statistical analyses have been used in the study

INTERPRETATION - Is the current interpretation/discussion of the results reasonable and not overstated?

Yes - the author's interpretation is reasonable

OVERALL MANUSCRIPT POTENTIAL - Is the current version of this work technically sound? If not, can revisions be made to make the work technically sound?

Probably - with minor revisions

PEER REVIEWER COMMENTS:

GENERAL COMMENTS: The authors have taken a step ahead and thought of conducting a study among undergraduate students. The concept of fecal transplantation is yet to be accepted by doctors as well as patients. The study can also create awareness regarding FMT among students.

The online survey is a better way to conduct these studies where the opinion can be confidential.
REQUESTED REVISIONS:

The authors should mention how the online survey was conducted in methodology.

RESPONSE: we have addressed this in the revision.

The sample size is very small. How did they arrive at it?

RESPONSE: We accept that the sample size is small, however it is representative. All the students were third year students rotating in the moment of the study in a single ward.

The authors could have included all the medical students till third year as they only required students not exposed to the concept of FMT. This would have given a better insight to the survey results.

RESPONSE: We did not include younger students because we considered that they have less medical knowledge.

The results could have been represented in tabular form for better understanding.

RESPONSE: we have addressed this in the revision.

There are minor grammatical errors which can be rectified by the authors. The results can be represented in tabular form.

RESPONSE: we did find some grammatical errors and we have corrected them.