Author’s response to reviews

Title: The association between health professionals’ international experience and the academic output of their students in Harbin, China

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Author’s response to reviews:

Dear Editor and Reviewer,

Your comments were highly insightful and enabled us to greatly improve the quality of our manuscript. In the following pages are our point-by-point responses to each of the comments.

Revisions in the text are shown using yellow color for additions.

Yours sincerely,

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Technical Comments:

1. Please move the statement from 'Consent to publish' section to 'Ethics approval and consent to participate' section. If identifying images or other personal or clinical details of participants are presented that compromise anonymity, a statement of consent to publish from the patient should be included. This section must be included even if it is not applicable to your manuscript. If consent to publish is not applicable to your manuscript please write ‘Not Applicable’ in this section.
- The statement from 'Consent to publish' section has been moved to 'Ethics approval and consent to participate' section. And ‘Not Applicable’ was written in consent to publish section.

2. Please represent authors' names using their initials, not their full name, in the Authors’ Contributions section. If there are any duplicated initials, please differentiate them to make it clear that the initials refer to separate authors.

- The authors' names in the Authors’ Contributions section were replaced by their initials.

3. Please in the 'Acknowledgement' section only include people that have contributed to the study.

- ‘Not Applicable’ was written in 'Acknowledgement' section.

4. In the 'Funding' statement, please declare the role of the funding body in the design of the study and collection, analysis, and interpretation of data and in writing the manuscript.

- The role of the funding was declared in the 'Funding' statement.

5. Please provide a list of all the abbreviations used in the manuscript. This list should be placed just before the Declarations section. All abbreviations should still be defined in the text at first use.

- All the abbreviations used in the manuscript were provided in the ‘Abbreviations’ section which was placed before the Declarations section

6. Figure files should contain only the image/graphic, as well as any associated keys/annotations. If titles/legends are present within the figure files, please remove them and include them under a separate heading of 'Figure Legends' after the References.

- Legends were removed from the figures and were included in the Figure Legends section after the References.

Editor Comments:

1. In accordance with BioMed Central editorial policies, could you please ensure your manuscript reporting adheres to COREQ guidelines for reporting qualitative studies. This is so your methodology can be fully evaluated and utilised. Can you please include a completed COREQ checklist as an additional file when submitting your revised manuscript.
A completed COREQ checklist was attached.

Reviewer reports:

Methods

1. Lines 15-16: It is not clear what is meant by "HMU is the Western medical registration authority…" Is HMU an authority that registers physicians for practice in addition to being a university?

   - To avoid misunderstanding, this sentence "HMU is the Western medical registration authority…" has been deleted.

2. Lines 30-35: Provide n's in addition to percentages.

   - The numbers were provided in line 30-35.

3. Line 39: The use of the word "graded" is still not clear, as it implies giving the students a grade/mark. I suggest eliminating the word "graded" in this sentence: "PhD students in China are differentiated by their year of enrollment."

   - The word "graded" in this sentence in line 39 has been eliminated.

4. Line 50: Does this imply that someone who went abroad for less than 6 months would be considered a "resident"? It's not clear in the Methods where you collected the information on health professionals.

   - Health professionals with less than six months study-abroad experience were not included in this study and they were not ‘resident’ professionals. And this sentence was added in line 50.

5. Third paragraph of the Methods: 100% response rate belongs in the Results section.

   - ‘100% response rate’ has been removed to the Results section in line 1.

6. Fifth paragraph of the Methods: It's not clear how students chose and advisor. For example, are the variables about the advisor (8, 9, 10 and 11) known to the students when they choose and advisor?

   - The variables about the advisors were public information and known to the students. To avoid misunderstanding, the sentences have been replaced by ‘We tried to find out the correlations between these overt factors and students’ scientific research ability and identify which factor should be considered most for students when choosing advisors’ in the fifth paragraph of the Methods.
7. According to lines 51 - 55, the same questionnaire was distributed to the 257 control students of resident professionals. But the questionnaire includes questions for the tutor regarding studying abroad. How did the students complete this section of the questionnaire for the tutors who studied abroad, but less than 6 months? Did they complete this section but the authors classified the tutors as "residents"?

- Questions regarding the advisor’s information of studying abroad were not filled by the 257 control students of resident professionals. And this was added in paragraph 6 line 54.

Discussion

8. A discussion of how international experiences in English language countries versus non-English language countries would impact the results. Also, could some of the health professionals have studied abroad in low-resource environments?

- Thank you so much for this advice. This discussion of how international experiences of advisors in English language countries versus non-English language countries, and low-resource environments versus high-resource environments, would impact the academic output of their students is a new subject and needs to be explored in depth. This subject would be exactly what we are going to research in the near future. And this statement was added in the last paragraph of discussion.