Reviewer’s report

Title: Assessing the training needs of medical students in patient information gathering; a qualitative study

Version: 0 Date: 30 Aug 2019

Reviewer: John Frain

Reviewer's report:

This was an interesting paper which I enjoyed reviewing for you. I apologise for the delay in submitting my review for you. It is a helpful 'Where are we now?' paper. I felt the introduction and background underplayed the strength of the existing evidence in terms of identified skills which facilitate the content gathering of the history. This may have made me want to stop reading at an early stage. However, some of the evidence was discussed in some detail in the final sections and this was good to see. However, you could consider restructuring these sections as the gist of the paper could be 'we have evidence and some established methods but do students and teachers feel they actually work?' After all, all of your participants had experience of communication skills training albeit of varying quality. The methodology of sample selection needs a bit more detail to add transparency. Description of the analysis was fine. The results were allowed to speak for themselves and these would be helpful to reader who is either a novice or an expert in the field. The results and the discussion identified relevant issues around the transition from simulation-based learning to real world. Issues with feedback were well highlighted. Distinction could be given greater clarity between process and content, their relationship to one another and how both need to be addressed in an educational programme.

Overall, I felt this to be a worthwhile study and one I would want to read were I either new to the topic or an experienced student/ teacher. I feel some of the language and sentence construction needs tightening up to make it more succinct. Training in clinical communication does exist now and this addresses current issues quite well. It identifies several lines of further possible research and educational intervention. The paper was well referenced and acts as a useful pointer to other resources. My own personal view is it is helpful in identifying issues to be addressed in students in transition, for example from preclinical training to clinical practice

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.

Yes

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Yes

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If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

Not relevant to this manuscript

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Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Needs some language corrections before being published

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