Reviewer’s report

Title: Must we remain blind to undergraduate medical ethics education in Africa?:-a cross-sectional study of Nigerian medical students

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Reviewer: Mary White

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Must We Remain Blind to Undergraduate Medical Ethics Education in Africa?

Reviewed by Mary T White, PhD

This is an important study exploring medical students' exposure to medical ethics in the formal medical curriculum at one Nigerian medical school, how medical ethics may best be taught and fostered, some perceptions of controversial ethical issues, and students' perceived ethical violations. The study is largely well organized and largely well-written. It could be strengthened with 1) further discussion of what competence in medical ethics entails - what knowledge, attitudes, and skills are involved; 2) some reorganization of material; 3) further explanation of what the data in Table 3 do and do not represent; 4) some word replacement for clarity, and extensive copy-editing. Details below:

ABSTRACT

Line 7. Moral attitudes are not the same as ethics. What does "ethics" mean here, and what competencies in ethics do you think should be taught and cultivated in medical education?

Line 25. I did not interpret these data as indicating clear tendencies toward paternalism. How do you reach this conclusion?

BACKGROUND

Line 32 substitute "ethically" for "unprecedented"

50. Delete "adequate"

Lines 54. Here it may help to insert material from lines 121-139 in the discussion (and rewrite/summarize it in the discussion) - all this provides more context for this study. In this section it may also be helpful to describe the content and objectives of ethics training and why this is important.

METHODS
Results

96. Note, I assume from the narrative that the students only perceived medical teachers acting unethically - it is not clear that these acts were in fact unethical and/or who decided that. Clarify what conclusions can and cannot be drawn from these responses.

104-105 It would help to include some of the other examples close behind the top two in Table 4, maybe all those scoring in the 50s, to see what patterns they reveal.

Discussion

117. It is unclear why it is necessary to mention these other response rates here.

156-160. This is a good summary of the goals of ethics training. It would help to mention this in the introduction as well.

168. "Raging" is a bit strong - delete.

179. Again, the students only perceived behaviors as unethical - they may not have had complete information or understood how what they were seeing fit in a larger picture.

184-190. Yes, important to affirm the importance of institutional culture and role-modeling

193 - 207 It is not clear to me that these conclusions can be drawn from the data. It seems to me that all that can be inferred is that students vary in their responses depending on their knowledge, values, and experience and perhaps also specific patients they have in mind when they are responding. I would like to see much further discussion of why these questions were developed and what they were intended to reveal. This discussion suggests there may have been "right answers" in mind, but if so, what were they?

208-end - excellent conclusion.

Some of the writing could be strengthened with copy-editing for vocabulary selection as well as punctuation according to typical English syntax. But overall, the paper is largely well organized and well-written.

With the questions and revisions suggested addressed, I believe this would be worthy of publication. I recommend revise and resubmit.
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

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?
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I am able to assess the statistics

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