

Impact of a National Journal Club and Letter Writing Session on Improving Medical Students' Confidence with Critical Appraisal [Response to Letter]

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Dear editor

We thank the authors for their considered comments and insightful questions.¹

Ng and Yap mention that they would like more information on the training and experience of the tutors. All of the tutors involved in delivering critical appraisal small group lectures had attended a minimum of a one-week teaching skills course. Additionally, they were all academic foundation doctors. In London, this entails competitive selection to a research post after a rigorous interview involving critical appraisal of an abstract, and a proven interest in academic medicine. Approximately half of the additional tutors involved in mentoring were also academic foundation doctors, and most had undergone teaching skills courses as a compulsory part of their medical training.

Please note that 84 students completed the pre-course survey, of which 74 completed the post course survey, indicating a response rate of 88%. There were additional attendees at the conference (n=14) who did not complete the pre-course survey due to last minute attendance and were therefore not eligible for follow-up. We do agree that unsatisfied delegates of the course may be less inclined to complete post course feedback forms, and therefore certificates were indeed provided on completion of the post course survey. However, it is our opinion that part of the reason for loss to follow-up was that post-course emails were directed to participant's junk mailboxes, since we received many surveys long after the deadline for completion. This is an issue we are hoping to rectify for future courses.

Finally, we agree with the authors regarding additional methods of success. The aim of this study was to assess student confidence and also the feasibility of this teaching method.² However, we are planning to repeat this course in the future with a longer follow-up duration. We hope to not only capture data on subsequent letters to editor, but also to perform objective assessments of critical appraisal skills before and after the course.

Disclosure

The authors report no conflicts of interest in this communication.

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