

## Reviewer's report

**Title:** Healthcare Worker Competencies for Disaster Training

**Version:** 1 **Date:** 31 December 2005

**Reviewer:** Clifford S Mitchell

### Reviewer's report:

#### General

This manuscript addresses an important topic, but, considering when it was written, appears not to recognize a significant amount of relevant work that has occurred recently related to this topic. While it is understandable that the literature review on which the work was originally based must have been arbitrarily cut off in 2004, it is not clear why the authors do not acknowledge that a large body of work related to training needs for health care workers (and a number of other professions) has accumulated since that time.

For example, I replicated the authors' queries for the years 2004-5, and 269 healthcare-related articles were returned. While not all were necessarily related to weapons of mass destruction or disaster preparedness, a significant number that were not cited in the current manuscript did bear directly on this issue. Thus, the authors miss a significant opportunity to comment on work already published, some of which actually has a direct bearing on (and reaches similar conclusions to) the authors' findings.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

The recommendations reached by the authors are very similar to recommendations and competencies for public health workers developed by Gebbie et al and published by the CDC, and similar findings have been identified in a number of recent publications, not only with respect to health care workers, but to workers more generally. The manuscript would be stronger if it put these recommendations in a broader context, given the work that has been done previously by emergency responders and the military in similar arenas.

In addition, the manuscript suffers because the authors do not disclose the data used to develop these recommendations. Although the manuscript describes a process of scoring and refining the competencies, none of the baseline data are presented, so it is not possible to know how many other competencies were considered, what the distribution of recommendation scores was, and so forth. Given that the authors went to the trouble of conducting a semi-formal Delphi process, and the fact that many of these competencies already exist in the literature, the one relatively unique aspect of this paper might be the use of a Delphi process to evaluate various suggested competencies. However, we have not been presented with the data to be able to do that.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

**What next?:** Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No

**Declaration of competing interests:**

As I mentioned when I queried the editors (and did not receive a reply), I work in the same institution as the authors of this manuscript. I do not participate directly in any work with them, particularly as it relates to this topic, but I do know one of the authors (EB Bass) and know of some of the others by reputation. I do not believe that this would necessarily disqualify me as an objective reviewer, but I want to be certain that it is disclosed.