

## **Reviewer's report**

**Title:** 'I would love to come home, but could never work like that again'.  
Qualitative findings on health professional emigration

**Version:2****Date:** 16 December 2014

**Reviewer:** Allison Squires

### **Reviewer's report:**

Thank you for the opportunity to review this paper. It offers timely insights into how domestic conditions can influence a key dynamic in health labor markets.

What detracts from this paper overall is that it reads like it was cut and pasted from different manuscripts and does not flow well overall. I believe substantial editing will help improve the flow of the manuscript. The authors may also find Sandelowski's (2012) article on "Writing Usable Qualitative Findings" useful for improving the presentation of the results.

There are several other major issues in the manuscript that need to be addressed before this paper could be considered for publication.

1) The background section needs reorganizing. This section should start with a general introduction to the issue of health professionals migration and then proceed to describe the dynamics specific to the Irish context. There should also be a section that briefly discusses the issues specific to each profession. This is important given the disparities in the survey responses.

There also needs to be much more description about the known issues around 1) nurse-to-patient ratios (for perspective on what actual working conditions are like in terms of volume/staffing), 2) shift work expectations for all roles, and 3) the nature of medical training in the country. This will help make more sense of the results. These could even be summarized in a table with the key variables illustrated across professions. As a contextually naive reader, I do not feel I have enough contextual background to be satisfied that the results have a link to the reality reported by the participants.

2) Methods: How did they develop the survey questions? From what kind of evidence? How do they really know they were covering all factors influencing migration?

3) Why only reporting on 2 of 7 questions? This doesn't make sense since there were 7 questions total on the same topic. The authors need to explain.

4) An additional limitation is disparate representation of RN and MW in sample, thus biasing the data toward physician perspectives. Since the authors did not offer any information about specific findings for each profession, this has to be included.

5) Report respondent sample size etc. and themes in results, not in methods.

6) There is no way a simple thematic analysis of survey data should be compared to in-depth analyses and their techniques. This should be removed. The volume of responses compensates for the lack of depth.

Upon further review, you may want to review content analysis techniques since that approach actually appears to fit better with what you actually did. See the article by Hsieh & Shannon (2005) for a methods reference.

6) The findings are too biased toward physician perspectives due to the sample size differences. Was there anything unique to RN and MW?

7) The results section needs major reorganization to improve the flow. Begin with reporting the demographics of the participants. Then create a summary paragraph that synthesizes your findings, including the named themes. Tell the reader why you are reporting the themes in a specific order, because at present they do not flow well nor in a logical fashion. It reads like you are jumping around and themes that relate to each other do not refer back to each other.

8) Because of the disparities in sample sizes between the professions, it would be helpful to include a section on findings unique to the RN and MW population. The majority of the results clearly come from MDs and bias the presentation that way.

9) It seems like one theme that should be in there is the impact of health professions training styles on the emigration system. That is clearly a major driver of physician migration in your results, yet not acknowledged as a specific theme when it seems it should be. Long shifts can be bad, but when you are berated and chastised by misogynistic teachers who feel you should be able to hack it since they went through it too, whole other story.

10) Keep citations out of results and only in discussion.

11) The discussion is an opportunity to illustrate what is being done, what data are lacking, and what else needs to be done to draw people back. This is not imminently clear.

12) If this paper is submitted in reference to the CFP for the Code special issue, then the Code's part about HP retention needs to be highlighted there. It will set up the paper better and its importance. Even if not submitted for the CFP, it would help the paper a lot.

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

**Quality of written English:**Acceptable

**Statistical review:**Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.