Reviewer’s report

Title: Becoming a general practitioner? - Which factors have main impact on career choice of medical students

Version: 2 Date: 22 November 2010

Reviewer: Adrian Hastings

Reviewer’s report:

General comments

The issue of career choice amongst medical students is important and many countries experience the same phenomenon as the authors report of fewer students choosing primary care, which is usually the speciality providing the greatest number of training grade posts. The authors have found papers from many different countries for which they are to be congratulated. This does make their statement that there is little evidence for the reasons for the relative unpopularity of general practice unsupported. Overall the paper can make a significant contribution to the evidence about variations in this problem around the world. However, to be published substantial revisions will be needed.

Essential revisions

The title of the report and the aim indicate that the paper is about factors influencing career choice for general practice amongst students in one state of Germany. As such comparing students opting for general practice as their first choice with five other specialities makes the presentation of the data unnecessarily complicated. Particularly as responses of 591 students choosing 20 other specialities were not included in the analysis. I suggest that in rewriting the paper dichotomisation of responses should be by GP versus all other specialities.

I assume the questionnaire was administered in the German language. The authors should review the translation of the items and the anchors on the Likert response scale with a translator who is a native English speaker. In particular I am unsure how to interpret the differences between ‘rather agree’, ‘partly agree’ and ‘rather do not agree’. I congratulate the authors on using a factor analysis to justify allocation of statements to the seven domains. Having done so they should use their five point rating scale as an interval scale (converting degree of agreement to a number 1-5) and report the differences in mean responses to each of the domains. It is not legitimate to dichotomise the responses with three points on the scale indicating agreement and two disagreement.

I did not understand the comment that the denominator was not known. The results section states there are 12,062 medical students in BW, so I have assumed this is the potential number of respondents. The authors should explain why their response rates is only just over 10% and whether this has biased their
results.

The authors should I believe have considered and referenced the work of A Grant of the Open University in developing the Sci 59 as it gives well evidenced insight into factors that might affect medical student and training grade doctor choices of career.

If the presentation of the data can be simplified along the lines I suggest and my concerns about the translation of the items and the scale anchors then the paper can be published.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests