Reviewer's report

Title: Tracking Family Medicine Graduates. Whom do they see, what services do they provide and where do they go?

Version: 1 Date: 17 October 2011

Reviewer: Jan Schuling

Reviewer's report:

The authors have certainly chosen a relevant topic that deserves attention of policymakers. This rather complex study addresses interesting questions that are answered with data from health administrative systems. This strategy raises some questions concerning validity:

Major compulsory revisions

1. Is the OHIP billing a sound measure for defining the FP graduate’s patient population? Is there no shopping of patients?

2. The FP graduate’s workload is based on the OHIP billings; I wonder if a certain billing stands for an exact amount of time. The authors mention the problem of shadow billings, which seems to introduce bias.

3. Patients attending CHCs are not included in the CAPE database. As there appear to be 73 CHCs in Ontario a considerable number of patients must be excluded. Is the study population of patients still representative? Are there patient profiles from other regions in Canada?

As the authors declare their overall purpose is to determine the type of information for physician resource planning using health administrative data, one expects a statement in the Discussion section on this matter. In view of the validity issue I keep wondering: Are there no means to check the acuity of patients and the representation of workload by billing through taking a sample of patients and FM graduates?

Minor compulsory revisions

3. In the Introduction the authors refer to a study (ref 9) that addresses specific demographic and attitudinal factors which influence choosing FM as a career, but the answers which must be interesting for policy makers, are not provided.

4. The Results section opens (same for Discussion) with a description of the FM graduates: unfortunately this is not announced in the introduction. The answer to the first study question, the description of the patient population of the FM graduates is rather sparse compared to the other data. There are no data given on sex and age; one misses a comparison with other studies, as well as a reference of the overall population.

Discretionary revisions
5. Please explain the position of the FM in an emergency ward: is this just a part of his FM working schedule? Or is this fulltime?

6. Compare in the Discussion section also the scope of practice provided by FM graduates of Ontario with the data from the US and Australia.(ref 11-15)

Suggestion: restructure Results and Discussion section by creating paragraphs corresponding with the number of the questions in the Introduction. A logic order would be:

1. where do they go?
2. whom do they see?
3. what service do they provide?

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**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.