Reviewer's report

Title: What challenges hamper Kenyan family physicians to pursue their mandate of family medicine? A qualitative study among family physicians and their colleagues

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Reviewer: Liz Grant

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1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?

No - the data crosses a number of areas, all of which are important and pertinent to Family Medicine in Kenya, but not all of which are directly linked to the study question as framed in the abstract. The study question is poorly framed, the idea behind it is important but the width without depth of the question has created a vagueness in the paper. The study question claims to a) explore the expectation of family medicine providers, colleagues, and policy makers of the construct of family medicine, b) assess the level to which the family physician is able to live up to the expectations c) challenges that they face. These areas are not systematically dealt with.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?

There needs to be more clarity in the methods section including the processes, eg it is not enough to say that at random 3 FPs were selected. Comments such as "about 25 direct colleagues were invited " is not adequate for a paper of this nature. While recognising the difficulties of timing and the priority that must be given to clinical work it is not acceptable to have a FGD where "participants walked in and out of the session at their convenience" . The event ceases to be a FGD as the dynamics inevitably change with the shift in the group numbers and participation. More information on what the key documents were, how they were analysed is needed. More info on ethnographic and observational methods required. The authors say " triangulation has been reached" which reflects a misunderstanding of triangulation. The authors assert that data saturation was reached, this statement requires an evidence base and explanation to inform how the decision was reached.

3. Are the data sound?

The qualitative transcripts are sound and well referenced though a table of participants would have been useful. The results section needs much clearer signposting. Little observational data or data from policy reports appears to be used.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
There is not enough information to assess. It would be useful to have information on the ethics approval process, and especially if ethics were sought for all hospitals in which FP worked.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
The discussion need to be more analytical, looking at why the FPs and others say what they do, and the meaning of their comments in the context of the greater whole. The discussion also needs to cover the area of which expectations family physicians live up to, as indicated in the abstract. There is not sufficient information in the results section to allow a rigorous analysis of this. The conclusion focuses on challenges but needs to be conclude on the other findings.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
Some limitations are explored, but not all. A comment on potential bias is needed and on the limitations of the structure of interviews.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
The authors do refer to other pertinent African based literature, but the discussion does not take the findings of this literature fully into account.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
The title does capture what the study concludes with, but the aims as stated in the abstract under Background suggests a different title would be more useful, and the results focus specifically on two of the three aims.

9. Is the writing acceptable? There are flaws in English usage and grammatical mistakes that can easily be rectified. The writing needs to be tighter in places, and a number of slack expressions such as "about 25" need to be cleared out of the text/

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

**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