Reviewer's report

Title: Public Health Education: A Report from Mosul and A Plan for Change

Version: 1 Date: 26 October 2004

Reviewer: Suzanne Cashman

Reviewer's report:

General
The topic is timely and one which many readers will find interesting. Given the high profile of Iraq, I think readers will be left wanting more from this article. What has been written is fine...but not enough has been written. For example, as a reader I wanted to know more about Iraq's decline in health indicators. With a high level (at least historically) of literacy in its population, I found myself wanting to know whether health indicators had declined markedly from pre-1980 levels. I also found myself wondering where--if ranked--it stands within the WHO country level rankings. I found the second sentence of the opening paragraph relatively mild. Isn't Iraq a country in complete shambles? Certaining something more than "severe shortages" as the authors report. Not to be overly dramatic about it, but simply from the news, it seems to me that the case for Iraq's needs could be made more forcefully in the opening paragraph.

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

In the second paragraph, examples of problems are offered, but no information regarding the years these figures refer to. Setting these into a temporal context would be helpful.

At the end of the first page, the authors do note that the "problems in Iraq are overwhelming" and proceed to lay out a plan to reestablish a university in the northern part of the country. Do they see this as a beacon for other universities in the country? Do they intend that what happens to repair the U of Mosul should stand as an example for other universities in Iraq? And are they drawing on any examples from other war-torn countries to play out their plan for bringing this university into the 21st century? Or is this plan one that has been hatched without the benefit of historical examples? The authors should explain the Mississippi Consortium of International Development. What is it? Why is the MCID involved and engaged in this project?

Recovery, Retooling, Reestablishment...as I reader I want more information about these phases. Recovery: What are the acquisitions you speak of? What are the colleges in the University to which they'll be distributed? What is involved in the faculty exchange program? Retooling: what are the innovative trends you refer to? Who are the "Partner Institutions"? How were they selected? Will you include distance learning? Reestablishment: What is the program at the UMMC that will increase the nurse researcher pool? How will the Dept of Community Medicine "develop sustainable health outreach programs in sanitation"? Where do the mini-grants come from? What procedures/guidelines will be used to judge the grants and award the funds?

As you can see, I think the paper needs to be expanded considerably. As it stands, it is too light and superficial to be useful to readers.

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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 limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

None