Reviewer's report

Title: Medical Students' Choices of Specialty in The Gambia: The Need for Career Counselling

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Reviewer: Jennifer Reath

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- Major Compulsory Revisions

This is an interesting paper that reflects on the career choices of medical students at the University of Gambia in comparison with the international literature.

However the paper is not well written and major revision is required before it would be suitable for publication.

Additionally the study reports findings based on a 50% response rate which limits its usefulness even in the local context.

The methodology described at the end of the paper provides more detailed information than is required however there is no description of the survey tools used nor the methods used in recruiting the students.

The Results and to an even greater extent the Tables include responses to a wide range of demographic questions which are not further analysed or reported in this study e.g. age and occupation of the parents, year in the course, schooling prior to university, order amongst siblings in the family.

The paper would be improved by a focus on the key areas considered and discussed.

Particular examples of the grammar and spelling errors include:

1. There are many examples of minor errors such as the spelling of counselling (repeatedly); “views on” instead of “views of”; “researches” instead of “researchers”.

2. Sentences are often long and complex, making comprehension difficult e.g. in the first paragraph of the introduction.

3. At times (particularly in the discussion) it is difficult to understand what the authors are proposing for example:

   “Lots of effort needs to be done to identify the factors that discourage the students from these areas and get them acted upon...”

   “Although this might be an urgent problem now in The Gambia but once we have
the minimum required number of specialists to run The Medical School; family medicine would be the solution to improving the national health indicators.”

4. Referencing is often incorrect for example:

- The phrase in the introduction “associations with particular personality types” requires a reference;
- “Paice E. Career pathways. BMJ 2002;19:325” is not a correct reference for this paper;


5. Statements are not linked well to the evidence supporting them for example:

- “Careers differ in their demands, requiring different amounts of intellectual ability, manual skill, long-term commitment, or willingness to work in particular environments, and can be better suited to particular personalities, aptitudes, and physical dispositions. Individuals also differ, having different aptitudes, interests and abilities.”

- “The applications of these theories to medical careers are self-evident and describe many of the problems facing medical students and junior doctors.”

6. The authors make claims which are not substantiated in the references they quote, for example in the introduction the assumption is made that time spent in other than the final choice of discipline is “time wasting”

7. The discussion includes statements that appear to contradict the findings reported previously for example:

“For males both Internal Medicine and Surgery accounted for the most preferred first” choice of specialty, followed by Public Health and Obstetrics and Gynaecology.”

This contradicts the statement in the Abstract:

“males preferred internal medicine, surgery and obstetrics/gynaecology.”

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**
I have no competing interests