Reviewer's report

Title: Fitness-to-practice concerns in rural undergraduate medical education: a qualitative study

Version: 2 Date: 9 April 2014

Reviewer: Kathleen Brooks

Reviewer's report:

This paper involves qualitative study of an interesting question - identification of types of Fitness To Practice issues and Concerns in medical students, and perspectives on addressing such issues in a country which has instituted a governmental mandatory system of reporting for practicing health professionals. The paper examines this question in the context of rural health education. It reviews major literature including Papadakis’ work. This conceptual framework situates the research questions. Authors use appropriate qualitative methods to examine their questions. The themes they identify help to address the research questions they pose.

Minor Essential Revisions:

The paper does not include a "Limitations" section and needs to do so. This paper involved a small number, they were unsuccessful at including a particular group of students who had difficulties. It specifically looked at rural educational settings, which limits generalizability beyond rural, which is fine but needs acknowledgement. However, some acknowledgement that it is Australian rural and Australian governmental rules is necessary as the public policy issues/initiatives and governmental reporting regulations are different in different countries and should be acknowledged. I believe all of these points can be acknowledged in a limitations section of the paper and it will make the paper stronger.

Discretionary Revisions: In reading and re-reading the paper, I have some confusion in certain sections about whether it is addressing the FTP model to use for evaluation of student behavior or health professional practitioner behavior. The overall paper suggests the focus is on understanding early detection of FTP in students, but then in places the paper veers into practitioners, including student identification of practitioner problems and the challenges of doing so in a hierarchical environment. While this is indeed an interesting point, I think it is a side discussion that takes away from the paper's focus on students.

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.
Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.