Reviewer's report

Title: University hospitals as drivers of career success: An empirical study of the duration of promotion and promotion success of hospital physicians

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Reviewer: Jonas Nordquist

Reviewer's report:

This is a paper about the promotion of German doctors in academic hospitals. This research aims at investigating the impact working in an academic health system has on doctors career. Here are five comments:

Major Compulsory

1. Why is this topic of interest to anyone outside Germany? What are the general questions of interest in this research? Why would this be of any interest to readers of the BMC Education? This has to be clarified.

2. The section on how the method is being presented leaves a lot to wish for. It seems that there is some kind of control group otherwise it would be impossible to reach the conclusions that an academic hospital structure have a negative impact on climbing to senior from junior etc. However, the method is presented in a very unclear way. The methodological issue with a focus on the control group, or control variables etc must be clarified. This is highly unsatisfactory as it stands today.

3. How does this research connect to any theoretical discourse and how does it connect to the international literature? What contribution does this research make (see also point no 1 above)?

4. It is claimed thorough out the study that there is a poorer quality of the supervision in academic hospitals versus “the others”. This is backed-up with ref 8-10. There seems to be a rather weak basis for this claim and it is very important to notice that the data and the analysis conducted give no, absolutely no, evidence for such a statement and it does go outside the overall aim of this study. This is truly problematic and has to be modified and reworked.

Minor Essential Revisions

5. Throughout the text there is almost like a mantra that junior-senior promotion is problematic in a academic health center, but that promotion from senior to chief is beneficial. There is so many repetition of this statement that is almost gives the impression of being a political message the authors like to take every opportunity to communicate.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest
Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests