Reviewer's report

Title: The influence of regional branch campuses on medical students' choice of specialty and practice location: a historical cohort study

Version: 1 Date: 14 March 2009

Reviewer: Tarun Sen Gupta

Reviewer's report:

• Major Compulsory Revisions
  nil
• Minor Essential Revisions
  1. MCAT should be spelled out a first usage (p1), particularly for an international audience
  2. ‘practice’ when used as a verb should normally be ‘practise’ (e.g. ‘.. more inclined to practise primary care..’ – p 4)
  3. I would suggest justifying why the 1087 graduates practising outside Indiana were excluded from the practice location analysis. I would also suggest clarifying whether the career choice of this group was considered.
• Discretionary Revisions
  4. There is no reference in the background to whether there is other literature on this topic. A previous study from IUSM is cited (reference 9, p15) but I would be interested to know if there is other work on the impact of regional branch campuses i.e. is this supporting existing evidence, or a completely new set of evidence?
  5. I would consider a map or diagramme of campus locations (p 4)
  6. I would place greater emphasis on the findings that students who attended any regional campus were more likely to undertake primary care practice / family practice (p12) and to practise outside the Indianapolis metropolitan area. I think most readers would be more interested in the broad correlation between regional training and regional (non-metropolitan) practice rather than specific linkage of practice location.
  7. It seems a pity that information was not available about the students' campus preferences (p18) as this may explain some of the findings. The impact of hometowns is discussed later, but it may be worth clarifying why the data is not available and/or whether there are plans to evaluate this in subsequent studies.
  8. The statements on p 19 about the numbers of students that the Terre Haute and Gary campuses ‘attract’ are not quite clear to me. Is this the number of
students who select that campus as their first choice?

**Level of interest:** An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**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