Reviewer's report

Title: Health Care Experiences of U.S. Retirees Living in Mexico and Panama: a Qualitative Study

Version: 2 Date: 7 May 2013

Reviewer: Tomas Mainil

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Major compulsory revisions

The last sentence of the first paragraph displays a lot of assumption: especially showing a projection without source (‘projected retirement’), and ‘some’ countries and ‘some’ first-generation immigrants: be more precise.

Second paragraph: ‘one 2007 report’: only one source is not much to document this phenomenon. In relation to this, it is also clear that the authors rely mainly on US academic sources, and that similar studies have been published on the European continent, see Health Policy 105(2012) 46-54. The health care experiences of British pensioners migrating to Spain: a qualitative study, authors: Helena Legido-Quigley et al. It would be valuable to confront both studies with each-other, for example in the discussion

Part methods/data collection: Explain the categories used in the semi-structured format (opinions about quality, health care experiences while living abroad...etc.: why these categories? Elaborate please.

Part methods/table: I do not see the value of the quantitative analysis in the paper. It is a small sample created for a qualitative research purpose, so it is certainly through that it is not generalizable or quantifiable, based on purposive sampling. I would certainly put less emphasis on this part, maybe even limit the table (the part Medical and Functional Characteristics is rather abundant). The paper would become better if there would be more evidence shown by citations, showing more context and rich text, now citations are sometimes limited (In parts such as ‘Outpatient care/Longterm care’ evidence is very limited

Results: P 7. The authors show that the majority of the interviewees use the private health system. This fact urges for more information about the public health system.

Results/making health care choices p.12: Panama as a medical tourism destination: elaborate more on the concept of medical tourism and its relation with the health care experiences of these Panama retirees.

General remark: The paper will also benefit from making a better distinction between the Panama and Mexico sample, now the examples are shown next to each-other, why not first talk about Panama, then about Mexico samples...
In ‘Discussion’, the authors argue in terms of ‘entrepreneurial business potential’: show evidence of literature on this. Is this actually through, that there is a business potential, and is this business potential crucial for these retirees, or can it be also contra-productive?

Some more information about the limitations of the study would be welcome.

Minor essential revisions

P 3-4: Last part of second paragraph: On the one hand…on the other hand, they may postpone’: provide sources here.

p.4: It is mentioned by the authors in the third paragraph that they used ‘structured interviews’: this could be related to quantitative survey research. It would be better to use the terms semi-structured or unstructured interviews.

Methods, p.4: The sampling procedure can be determined as convenience sampling or purposive sampling, please add.

A source deserving a look in the context of this article: A patient mobility framework that travels: European and United States-Mexican comparisons. Laugesen Health Policy 2010 Oct;97(2-3):225-31

Discretionary Revisions

In ‘Background’ the authors are indicating ‘a significant and increasing proportion are retirees’, in connection to ‘numerous scientific and popular media reports’: would it be possible to make this statement stronger by giving facts and figures, or showing evidence of these sources.

The authors indicate ‘5.25 million non-military American citizens’, but later on giving information about military retirees…it would be wise to describe this group also in the methods, because they probably have different characteristics than other retirees. And also p. 8: the authors start elaborating on veterans, and also P 12 Military retirees and Tricare.

Methods p. 4: Explain why you choose the criterium of ‘aged 55 or older’, and criterium ‘at least a year’

p. 10: It would be interesting to have some more elaboration upon the cross-cultural relationships between patients and providers.

P 15 , middle paragraph: use of ‘could have’, ‘other possible factors could be’, a lot of assumptions in this part.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
Quality of written English: Acceptable

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

Declaration of competing interests: I declare that I have no competing interests