Author's response to reviews

Title: The Generation and Gender Shifts in Medicine: An Exploratory Survey of Internal Medicine Physicians

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Version: 4 Date: 6 March 2006

Author's response to reviews: see over
Response to Gunilla Risberg’s Review

Major Compulsory Revisions
1. Reviewer’s Comments on Main Text, methods: The text under the “Aim” of the paper does not describe the aims of the paper. The aims are expressed in the preceding paragraph with the three research questions. The Reviewer also made suggestions for revisions to the “Setting” and “Design” subsections under “Methods” to make the text easier to follow and reduce redundancies.
Authors’ Response: We have revised this accordingly by moving the three research questions into the section labeled “Aims”. We have also revised the sections under the “Methods” section as suggested by the reviewer.

2. Reviewer’s Comments on Methods, data analysis: The analysis of the qualitative data needs to be clarified (e.g., how the themes were identified).
Authors’ Response: We have explained this is more detail and addressed the Reviewer’s concerns.

3. Reviewer’s Comments on Results and Discussion: There is little discussion of the results and no reference to the existing, relevant literature. Re-label this section “Results” and add a “Discussion” section (which the first three paragraphs of the “Conclusion” should be moved to). There should be some discussion of the gender differences among Gen Xers.
Authors’ Response: We have relabeled these sections and added more detail and reference to the relevant literature.

4. Reviewer’s Comments on Conclusions: see above and account for and discuss the results about women working part time.
Authors’ Response: We have expanded the discussion on women working part time in medicine.

Minor Essential Revisions
Authors’ Response: This has been revised accordingly.

2. Reviewer’s Comments on Methods, data collection: Were the interviews tape recorded and transcribed or notes taken?
Authors’ Response: We added the following “The interviewer typed participants’ responses in a word processing program on a notebook computer during the interview and reviewed her notes immediately after to correct any typographical errors or omissions.”

Discretionary Revisions
1. Reviewer’s Comments on Abstract, background: Are the demographic shifts particular to the medical profession?
Authors’ Response: Good point. We changed the sentence to “Two striking demographic shifts evident in today’s workforce in general are also apparent in the medical profession.”

2. Reviewer’s Comments on Abstract, methods: It is unclear why the numbers don’t add up – why are 20 interviews and 30 questionnaires excluded from the analysis? Perhaps leave out the total Ns?
Authors’ Response: We have reworded this section and hopefully clarified the dropping of cases.

3. Reviewer’s Comments on Results and Discussion, first paragraph: delete the first two sentences and revised the first sentence.
Authors’ Response: These changes have been made accordingly.
Response to Elisabeth Gjerberg’s Review

Reviewers’ General Comments:
1. The questions about the impact of women is not new, but it is of interest to examine the cultural shift in the new generation’s preference for more work-life balance.
   Authors’ Response: We agree and hope that by looking at both issues simultaneously it might make an important contribution to the changing nature of medicine.

2. It is confusing to report the proportions of Boomers and Xers from the qualitative data in the results section and recommends removing the percentages from Table 1.
   Authors’ Response: We have not revised the presentation of data in Table 1 because it is consistent with the journal’s formatting of table.

How were the two questions meant to measure patient care chosen – from the interview data, the literature, earlier studies? Their validity as proxies for career commitment needs to be discussed.
   Authors’ Response: We have provided a rationale for these items.

The question relating to work hours should be clarified – does it mean working at the office in the DOM or also include working at some other office or private practice?
   Authors’ Response: As indicated in the Data Collection section, it asks about the amount of time they work in total and for this population that may include their clinical office, hospital, university, etc. This has been clarified in the text.

Major Compulsory Revisions
Reviewer’s Comments on the Background Section: The two demographic shifts are not that particular to the medical profession. This section is almost context-free. Several issues are raised: (1) what are the proportions of women in medicine in Canada in general? And in the Department of Medicine in particular?; and (2) there is no reference to Coupland’s 1991 book which introduced the term “Generation X”; (3) The authors need to contextualize their questions and discuss the common characteristics of the two generations.
   Authors’ Response: We have added more detail and context in regards to: (1) the proportions of women in medicine in Canada and (2) reference to Coupland’s book and issues relating to women entering medicine. (We have added the percentage of women in the Department of Medicine (with comparable Canadian statistics) to the “Setting” description in the Methods section; and (3) the context relevant to the two generations.

Reviewer’s Comments on the Background Section: Concern about lack of integration of this paper with the past decades of work on the influx of women in medicine and limited review of the literature in regards to positive and negative expectations associated with women’s entry into medicine.
   Authors’ Response: We have expanded this section on women in professions and women’s entry into medicine.
Reviewer’s Comments on the Results and Discussion: (1) The discussion of Boomers interpretation of Gen Xers preference for a balanced life as an indicator of less commitment to medicine should be discussed in a broader context and better connected to the first part of the paper; (2) Elaborate more on how more Boomers than Xers report family responsibilities interfere with work but almost disappear when comparing women (Table 3) (e.g., do you have any information on their spouses?); (3) last sentence before conclusion, add references to the literature.

Authors’ Response: (1) this has been elaborated accordingly; (2) We have information on whether their spouse is employed (full-time or part-time) or not. The distributions for women with unemployed or part-time spouses are too small for meaningful comparisons however, particularly for the Boomers. Additional analysis reveals that about one-third of both male and female Boomers who have spouses working full time report family-to-work conflict. In contrast, for Gen Xers, one-quarter of the women in dual career relationships report family-to-work conflict but none of the men do. These findings hold when spouse’s work status is not taken into account. The more general results (not taking into account spouse’s employment status) are reported in the paper because there are not adequate data for comparing the various combinations of spouse’s employment statuses and to keep things simple. It is suggested that perhaps more Boomers report family-to-work conflict because they resent it, whereas Female Xers welcome it as part of having an integrated life. (3) references have been added.

Reviewer’s Comments on Conclusions: (1) Third paragraph in concluding section, add some additional references; (2) Clarify sentence about “it is interesting to note” in regards to women doctors in general or women doctors in this study and the great differences in work hours across different groups of women doctors; (3) generally integrate discussion with literature on work-life balance and women in medicine.

Authors’ Response: (1) additional references have been added; (2) this has been clarified; (3) this section has been expanded.

Reviewers’ Comments on Discretionary Revisions: (1) Outline the difference between residents and physicians – in what way is there work different?; (2) the workplace is the DOM in a university – does that mean a university hospital?

Authors’ Response: We have added this to the Setting description in the Methods section of the paper.