Reviewer's report

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

Version: 4 Date: 29 March 2006

Reviewer: Elisabeth Gjerberg

Reviewer's report:

General
The revised paper has in many ways improved, and I only have some suggestions for revision, in the category of “minor essential revisions”.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

In the Background section, the last part of the second paragraph, I would prefer if these sentences could be framed more like questions or hypothesis. To me, the authors are stating differences between BB and Xers as facts, but isn’t this part of the questions under scrutiny?

What does the differences between BB and Gen Xers in general mean to physician members of these generations?

In the fourth paragraph, at the end of the third sentence, I would add: and several European countries. (with reference to the literature)

I find the last sentence at the end of the same paragraph a bit simplifying or misrepresentative of the literature. It is correct that the gender division of labour in medicine have been explained by conflicting role expectations, that women physicians tend to make their career choices by balancing their domestic and occupational roles. According to some authors, this has found scant empirical verification, and at least these kinds of explanations had to be supplemented by others. Contrary to the individual-oriented explanations, structural explanations attempt to explain gender differentiation in light of structural conditions inherent in medicine (working conditions, career structure) and different masculine exclusionary practices (see for ex. Riska and Wegar 1993, Gjerberg 2002).

Table 1 – I still think it gives no meaning to use percentages (with decimals) in this table. The numbers of the physicians in the qualitative part of the study are small.

Questionnaires.
Would it be better to change the heading to: The survey (quantitative analyses) In the first sentence: In December 2004, 275 surveys …., I think the term questionnaire is more correct here.

Data Collection. I do not agree that the coding of the values 1 or 0 generates more meaningful results, but I think it makes it is easier to analyse the results.

Results,
The fifth paragraph. Using references to the literature in this paragraph made me wondering if the results presented are from the study or from the literature.
Discussion
The first paragraph: I find the third sentence a bit inconsistent with the results presented at page 7 (Results, second paragraph), where you say that both BB and GenX experience that doctors of GenX emphasise the work-family balance.
I think it is right that the influx of women of medicine have brought the issue of the work-life balance to the forefront, but it is also important to note that in the last decades male physicians increasingly have partners with their own career, that is they are under increasing pressure to assume a larger share of the responsibility for home maintenance and child rearing.

Finally, I would like the authors to consider or ponder on the high degree of similarity between the two generations, in spite of what they believed.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions