Reviewer's report

Title: Is networking different with doctors working part-time? Differences in social networks of part-time and full-time doctors

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Reviewer: Elizabeth E West

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for asking me to review this paper. I am always happy to read work on clinicians’ social networks as I believe that this is a very good way of gaining insight into the social structure of medical care. This study does appear to have been conducted competently, but I did find it difficult to read. This may be because the authors are not writing in their first language, but it makes it very difficult to determine the exact meaning of the text in places which is not acceptable in a scientific paper. I think this problem could be overcome by skilful editing, but there are a number of other problems with the paper that also need to be addressed:

1. The authors hypothesise that part-time doctors chose their relationships to maximise efficiency. What could be the possible mechanism here? Do you think that people actually think about their networks in this way? Is this a conscious calculation? I don’t find this convincing.

2. The theoretical section is poorly argued and does not underpin all of the arguments in the paper.

3. The authors should explain why they mainly used the data on ego networks rather than the complete networks for this study.

4. I am not sure that working less than 100% is the best definition of part-time. The part-time doctors in this study were still working about 0.76fte which is a very significant commitment to work. The lack of great differences in the constitution of their networks is therefore not very surprising. I don’t think that you can conclude from this study that part-time working does not affect informal networks in medical teams as they suggest on page 14.

5. The assessment of team characteristics is not well enough described on page 8 to permit replication and is therefore inadequate.

6. The authors do seem to have collected and analysed the data in a competent way and they take into account its multi-level structure.

In sum, I think there are some promising arguments in this paper. Part-time working is an important topic as there can be a lot of prejudice against part-timers. Women are also more likely to work part-time and this means that gender is highly salient to these debates. However, I do not think these data are suitable for testing these arguments because part-time in this context is still about 40 hours a week, so there is too little variation here and I think the
conclusions that they come to are not justified. Much work remains to be done on
the theoretical framework as well and clarifying the language and making the
paper more accessible. I think this paper has to be rejected on the grounds that it
is not scientifically sound. Major revisions might have been justified had the data
been more suitable for testing the hypotheses, but I conclude that there is too
little variation in the data as it is currently described.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that i have no competing interests