Reviewer's report

Title: A study of the number of physicians registered in Jamaica and their countries of training.

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Reviewer: Amy Hagopian

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Re: 'A study of the number of physicians registered in Jamaica and their countries of training.'

Jennifer M Knight-Madden
BMC Health Services Research

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Type of submission: Research

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
The question is an important one: does the physician licensure authority in Jamaica (or any country, by generalization) accurately record and report the identity, number, and specialty designation of the nation's physicians? I'm not sure the author summed up the question quite so succinctly, but this is clearly what she was getting at.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described? Are the data sound?
The methods section of the paper is the weakest, although the methods themselves may be sound. At least one source citation is too general: "various medical associations." The author also said "physicians known by the researchers (there was more than one??) to have migrated, retired or died who remained on the list were identified and were not included as practicing physicians." How do we know the researcher(s) are reliable sources for this information?

The random selection of 150 physicians was probably a reasonable idea, but how was the number 150 arrived at?

3. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
The traditional sections of the paper are present, but the detail provided in methods is too scant and the results are presented in a confusing way.

The introduction should include a more thorough literature review on whether similar studies have been attempted in other countries. I know, for example, there have been several papers on the low quality of the American Medical Association masterfile, which is the source in the US that provides nationwide
physician licensure data for research purposes.

Some background on the medical system in Jamaica would be helpful. For example, how many medical schools, and what is the size of the graduating class each year?

The results should be diagrammed or tabled in a way that we can follow the numbers that flow from various sources, so we can follow the discrepancies. The results section jumps around a little and it’s hard to tell where some findings came from. For example, the author says “14 physicians were found to be deceased,” but does not tell us whether this is known from the 150 sample or the author’s personal knowledge or other sources.

Much is made of the physicians found who were not licensed, but we don’t know how these people were uncovered. (“During the process of identifying physicians” is not a clear enough description.)

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
The problems are described above.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
No.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
Insufficiently.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
The title should reveal the story: “Jamaica’s medical licensure authority overestimates the number of physicians practicing in the country”

9. Is the writing acceptable?
Sadly, no. There are several grammatical errors and the language needs to be tightened and improved. Many undefined acronyms (FMS/UWI/UHWI), shorthand references (“the Gleaner”). If the editor decides to accept the paper, the author should find an editor to help her. I would be glad to suggest revisions after that stage.

CONCLUSION- Major Compulsory Revisions (which the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached). This is an important piece of research, and should be revised for resubmission. I encourage the author to 1) conduct a thorough literature review to find studies of this nature done in other countries and see what she can learn from them, and to strengthen the introduction, 2) diagram her findings on physician status in a flow chart or at least a table, 3) revise the methods section to be more thorough and clear, 4) get a professional editor to help her with the language. It’s definitely worth the effort to work on this paper and resubmit it.
**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

**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.