Reviewer's report

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

Version: 1 Date: 9 April 2008

Reviewer: Affette McCaw-Binns

Reviewer's report:

Overall comments:
The paper while worthwhile, needs to be better organized, issues stated more succinctly, grammatical errors corrected, and the discussion expanded to include an assessment of whether her findings were unique to Jamaica or part of an international issue of maintaining accurate registers of health professionals. These issues therefore need to be addressed before I would recommend that the paper be accepted for publication. More detailed issues are outlined below.

Abstract –
Background – too verbose, can be said more succinctly.
Methods –Grammatical errors
Results – Presentation very disorganized and unclear regarding source of data, she discusses a random sample but this is not included in her methods section.
Conclusion – Author should compare her results with similar studies to document if findings were unique to Jamaica, or an international problem. Strategies such as efforts to move to continuous registration through CMEs and re-registration should be discussed here also.

The Paper
Background – the year of graduation of the first UWI graduates is inaccurate.
Methods –
· The first sentence does not make sense.
· The language is very colloquial e.g. telephone book vs. telephone directory
· 1st paragraph, last sentence, has grammatical construction issues
· Author uses abbreviations which are not defined and would not be identifiable by an international audience
· The purpose of the random sample was not stated, nor was how it was selected and from what database identified

Results
· The authors states that she identified 29 other physicians from other sources, what were these other sources?
· A table comparing the contribution of the various sources and identifying the cross-listing of persons might be useful.

Discussion
· Discussion does not compare her results with similar studies to state whether her findings were unique to Jamaica or represents an international problem. Other strategies such as efforts to move to continuous registration through CMEs and re-registration should be discussed.
· The discussion suggests that relatives or migrants should inform the MCJ (Medical Council of Jamaica) of the death or migration of a physician. That clearly cannot be expected to be their responsibility! It should be the job of the MCJ to put systems in place to ensure that their register is up to date, using a strategy which they should determine.
· There is precious little statistical difference between 8.5 and 9.6 to say that the Jamaica physician to population ratio is above the non-Latin Caribbean; it would be more accurate to say it is similar.
· There is a major distinction between being unlicensed because you haven’t paid your registration fees or submitted your CME credits and practicing fraudulently by virtue of never being trained to practice medicine. One must be careful when making such comparisons.

Table
· The title for Table 1 is cumbersome. A simple title might be, “Physicians practicing in Jamaica, by country of basic training”
· Is there a distinction in the database between England and the United Kingdom as Ireland is also listed?

Figure
· UWI needs to be identified in a key. The title for the figure is incomplete and should document that it is looking at the “Trends in source of training of physicians practicing in Jamaica, 1930-2006” The results might also comment on the decrease in foreign graduates.