Reviewer's report

Title: Quality of Medical Training and Emigration of Physicians from India: an observational study

Version: 2 Date: 1 October 2008

Reviewer: Onyebuchi A Arah

Reviewer's report:

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

I commend the authors for the effort and care they put into their study. It is a much needed analysis supporting recent publications which suggest that emigration is from the relatively wealthier and more developed countries. See references below. Unfortunately, authors fail to capitalize on these global between-country results to parallel and contextualize their within-country findings.


Another important revision the authors should consider is the flow of the METHODS section. The current flow is somewhat hard to follow in some parts especially given the complex ways in which the variables were extracted from various resources. I will suggest using this flow: i) Study setting and data, ii) Measures (or Variables: describing the outcome variables first, and then the explanatory variables which actually turned to consume most of the methods anyway), and iii) Analytical Strategies (this should be more detailed than the current version on page 8).

Still on METHODS, I wonder why the authors did not consider a multivariable regression analysis.

On the measures of quality for ranking: why not also alternatively relate publications to faculty capacity (not just undergraduate seats)?

RESULTS: I am not sure I understand the order of presentation of the TABLES and FIGURES. At first I thought the authors wanted to present all US results first and the UK results, followed by the combined results but I am not sure that such separation is necessary or even easier to read.

Consider combining the US and UK results into same Tables or combine all US results into one, not spread across two or three Tables.
RESULTS (top of page 9): The results appear to mix in discussions of the findings.

DISCUSSION: Sometimes the authors refer to the emigration of individual graduates, at other times they refer to emigration fraction being higher at schools with higher quality. I believe the latter to be correct since the analysis and inference must be at the school level, not at the individual graduate level. This is a bit confusing for the reader.

Again, I miss in the DISCUSSION reflections and references to the broader work on correlations between level of human development and emigration from those countries. It seems the current authors’ findings support a possible theory that more advanced societies will tend to have better medical schools and that emigration will occur differentially from those medical schools and from across the more advanced countries: hence a positive advancement/development-related emigration between- and now also within-countries (with India as a case study).

Discretionary Revisions (which are recommendations for improvement but which the author can choose to ignore)

Pages 15, 16 and 18: Delete “…for emigration…” from the TITLES of Tables 1, 2 and 3.

Page 15: Ranking/Quintiles column: Add LOWEST in parenthesis next to Label I and HIGHEST next to Label V.

Foot notes under TABLES are repetitive across the TABLES.

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

Consider minor revision of the ABSTRACT to reflect clearly that the authors correlated emigration fraction of colleges/universities with the three types of quality of medical education.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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.