Reviewer's report

Title: Are "Village Doctors" in Bangladesh a curse or a blessing?

Version: 1 Date: 21 November 2009

Reviewer: Saxon Smith

Reviewer's report:

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
   I feel that the authors have defined the question well for a survey based research project. I found the article very interesting to read and a novel way by which to assess healthcare access in a rural community.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
   The methods are well described. However it would be informative to actually see the questionnaire sheet and its questions attached as a table. – Discretionary revisions

3. Are the data sound?
   The data appears generally sound. However, the authors did not define the method by which they obtained their “ideal situation” patient load of 30 patients per day. I would suggest that this is an unrealistic number in modern medical practice. As a result their figure of “600 MBBS doctors required” seems hyperbolic. – Major compulsory revision.

   Furthermore, I did not notice any analysis relating the rates of where patients visited for second opinions. That is to say they may have seen their “village doctor” initially but subsequently also saw their MBBS doctor for the same condition. It is important to differentiate this out if the authors wish to make recommendations about up-skilling “village doctors”. – Major compulsory revision.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
   The discussion is well written with a local focus. I am unsure as to whether the creation of the “600 MBBS doctors” would result in an increase in the uptake of their services and I believe this should be addressed. This would add weight to the argument for up-skilling “village doctors” as they seem to see a disproportionate number of minor illnesses. – Major Compulsory revision.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
   Limitations seem adequately discussed
7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
   Yes

9. Is the writing acceptable?
   Yes. Although I would remove “to one” from page 8, paragraph 3 line 2, as it is unnecessary. – Discretionary revision.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests