Author's response to reviews

Title: Building health systems capacity in global health graduate programs: reflections from Australian educators

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Dear BMC International Health and Human Rights Editors,

**Re: Submission of manuscript entitled: Building health systems capacity in global health graduate programs: reflections from Australian educators**

Health systems and health systems strengthening have emerged as a core public health challenge for international health. A number of articles have been published that advocate for greater emphasis on developing country strengthening health systems and have highlighted the need for stronger skills in these areas in order to achieve health goals.²

Despite this, there is very little evidence on how health systems education within public health education is being conducted. Frenk et al found that of 11,054 publications on the education of health professionals, 73% were about medical education and only 2% covered public health – much less health systems.³ Amidst the various calls for greater skills and debate about what constitutes health systems and what activities comprise health systems strengthening,⁴ ⁵ there is a need to develop understanding of what the desired competencies are for health systems capacity development, discuss how these competencies might best be developed and share experiences on how health systems capacity is built in educational settings.

A group of academics, practitioners and teachers from Australia’s leading schools of global public health have come together to do just that. We teach young Australians but almost 50% of our classes are made up of international students predominantly from low and middle income countries. Our proposed Debate submission outlines the paucity of lessons on health systems teaching, the adherence to traditional and largely outdated modes of public health teaching and provides real world examples of how Australian universities are aiming to build capacity in health systems in global health programs.

We don’t profess to have all the answers as to how best to teach health systems but we provide a perspective on the challenges, opportunities and dynamics of teaching health systems. We hope that this paper will contribute to BMC International Health and Human Rights’ commitment to innovative thinking on capacity building (best represented by the supplement on leveraging Makerere University’s strengths to improve health⁷) and that our paper will inspire and inform other public health educators to improve their health systems academic offerings.

Thank you very much for your consideration of our submission.

On behalf of the authorship team,

Joel Negin