Reviewers report

Title: Student perception about working in rural Nepal after graduation

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Reviewer: Carmen Dolea

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Major compulsory revisions - see below details about the revisions needed:

1. Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined?

The study states five objectives, but not all of them were answered at the end of the article. In general, the paper mixes a series of responses from students with analysis of the published literature, but there is no analysis of these responses in relation to the situation in Nepal. The question about problems with doctors working in rural areas is not new and has been extensively researched. The objective of obtaining information about minimum salary expectations and eventual associations between these salaries and students characteristics is not very relevant for policy makers, as perceptions of first and second year medical students changes as they advance in their studies. Also, no previous literature on minimum level salaries was presented, so that the readers can better understand what this study brings new compared to previous research. One objective, the correlation between salary expectations and students characteristics, was not discussed.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replicate the work?

No. The method employed is a qualitative survey with semi-structured interviews of students from first and second year of a private medical school in Nepal. It is well known that the perceptions of fresh medical students change as they advance in their studies, therefore the responses are not relevant for the actual choices of these students when they will graduate. Also the question about their opinions on the reasons why doctors don’t want to go in rural areas is not relevant, because these are not real opinions of doctors themselves; therefore these responses are also not relevant for policy makers.

Also, there is no discussion about the fact that these students may not be a representative sample of all medical schools in Nepal, as they come from a private school located in urban area. At best, the results could be relevant only for the region where the school is located; hence they may not be generalizable to the entire country. This is a limitation that the authors have indeed identified, but no discussion was provided about how to address this limitation.

3. Is the data sound and well controlled?

It is unclear how the responses to the semi-structured interviews were analysed: was there content analysis employed or what other qualitative method was used?
Also, because the questions in the questionnaire were not numbered, it becomes even less clear how the responses were analysed.

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

In general, yes. There are a few comments: in table 1, need to explain the symbol * used after “Financing” and Family residence”; Title of table 3 is misleading, as these are not real reasons of doctors, but perceptions of first and second year medical students. Table 4 also presents generic solutions, unclear what is the relevance of these answers for Nepal. Are these feasible and acceptable?

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?

The discussion of the evidence on rural retention is good, but it is not linked to the findings of the study and to the initial objectives of the study; there is a disconnect between this discussion and the results of this study.

The conclusions present general statements, not linked with the results of this study. Currently, the manuscript presents a mixed bag of results, not really hanging together; the policy implications of these results are not discussed.

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

To some extent, but it should be made clear these are first and second year medical students from a private school, otherwise it is misleading.

7. Is the writing acceptable?

The English language is acceptable, but the different sections of the paper seem to be written by different authors, a unified writing style should be used.

In conclusion, the authors should review the objectives of the study, because the data and results presented are really not responding to the objectives: the results are really opinions of first year medical students on conditions of work and expectations to work in rural area, which are subject to change as they advance in their studies. If the paper is resubmitted, it will have to detail the analysis of responses and make the study more relevant to the current situation in Nepal and use the previously published literature to discuss these specific issues, and not generic aspects of rural work.

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**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 I have no conflict of interest