Reviewer's report

Title: Dentist education and labor markets in Mexico. Elements for strategic planning.

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Reviewer: Till Bärnighausen

Reviewer's report:

This is a well-written, interesting article. Information on dentist labor markets is rarely available; this carefully conducted study fills an important knowledge gap. I particularly like that the study combines interpretation of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to create an understanding of issues in the balance between need, demand, and supply of dentists in Mexico.

MINOR ESSENTIAL COMMENTS

1. Mixed-methods approach

This study uses both qualitative interview and quantitative data to draw conclusions about the dentist labor market in Mexico – could the authors reflect on their conceptual approach to combining qualitative and quantitative data in this “mixed methods” approach in the Methods section.

2. Qualitative results

The authors briefly describe their qualitative coding approach All analytical categories were defined prior to data processing. Specifically, the write that the “coding classifications used for conceptual ordering of information collected during the interviews were: working conditions, hiring methods, unemployment, underemployment, income and benefits.” Based on this description, I would have expected subsections in the Results section on each of the themes covered in the qualitative interviews. Would it be possible to expand the description of the results to clearly distinguish between these different themes?

In addition, given that qualitative data has been coded and interpreted, the rigor of the qualitative component of this study could be improved by backing up claims based on interpretation of interview responses with representative quotes from the interviews. Such an approach would probably also provide interesting nuances to some of the broader summary statements based on the qualitative reviews, such as “Interviewed employers perceive an excessive number of dentists in the country and assert that academic institutions train more resources than the country and health institutions require. This exacerbates job searching and placement of graduates in the labor market.”

3. Paper sub-sections

The division of the paper into sections does not follow the convention in public
health and medicine. The current “Discussion” section is really a “Results” section – in addition, the description of the qualitative results could be enhanced by providing more nuance and detail.

The current “Conclusion” section is really a “Discussion” section. Please consider re-labeling these sections. The “Discussion” section could be enriched by adding thoughts on limitations of the current study and need for future research work.

4. Implications for Health Policy

One of the strength of this article is that it brings to light several important problems in the dentist labor market in Mexico – problems that could be addressed with health policy reforms. The paper does feature an implications section, but this section is short and remains very general. Please consider rewriting the implications section to include concretely stated policy recommendations that summarize the actionable insights gained through this study.

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.