Reviewer's report

Title: Career Choices and what influences Nepali Medical Students and young Doctors - a Cross-sectional Study

Version: 1 Date: 31 August 2012

Reviewer: Tim Usherwood

Reviewer's report:

This is a potentially significant research paper, addressing an important issue for health workforce planning in Nepal and in other developing world countries. However, a number of issues need to be addressed before it is suitable for publication:

1. The aim of the research was to understand participants' stated career preferences and the factors influencing these. However, the survey questionnaire did not explicitly seek respondents' current intentions. It isn't clear that the series of questions "When you started Medical school, did you have a clear medical career choice in mind? If so what was it? Has it changed now?" would necessarily elicit all respondents' current intentions.

2. While the survey instrument did not mention any specific specialty, the focus group questions were concerned mainly with general practice/community practice. This limited the opportunity for triangulation, which the researchers state as the intent of the focus groups.

3. Much of the baseline quantitative data is presented using bar graphs - tables would be simpler and clearer. The table underneath Figure 1 is difficult to interpret without actual numbers of respondents in each category, not just percentages. Elsewhere many results are presented only as percentages - in general, the numerator and denominator should be provided as well. No title or column headings are provided for the table under Figure 3. Figure 5 - what is the relevance of these data to the study aim? What does the title of Table 1 mean? "School Leaving Certificate" should be stated in full in the title of Table 2?

4. The quantitative findings in the text of the Results section are difficult to follow, and again greater use of tables and of absolute numbers (numerators and denominators) would assist the reader.

5. The authors need to explain the place of the MD degree in Nepal – in North America and elsewhere this is generally the primary medical degree, whilst in other countries it is a research degree equivalent to, or higher than, a PhD.

6. The text needs subediting. The narrative is rambling in places, especially in parts of the Results and Discussion sections, and there are changes in tense (eg at the start of the Methods section). The authors appear to have left a note to themselves in the final paragraph of the Introduction.
7. The Discussion section should start with a succinct statement of the findings specifically in relation to the Aims of the study.

8. The list of references needs review: citations are given in inconsistent style; the author of reference 9 was Bunker, not “Brunker” and the volume was 38 not 30; reference 12 is incomplete.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I am a member of the International Advisory Board of Patan Academy of Health Sciences and in consequence am acquainted with the first author. I have not received any fees or other funding in connection with my role on the Advisory Board.