Reviewer's report

Title: A Migration Solution to Health System Problems - Doctor Migration and Workforce Planning in the Irish context

Version: 1 Date: 14 July 2013

Reviewer: Tim Martineau

Reviewer's report:

Major essential revisions

Research question

1. A clear research question is needed (and this will have implications for the rest of the paper). Part of the paper seems to be arguing that "reliance on internationally trained health workers to address workforce shortages will become increasingly unsustainable" and that "the WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel recommends that countries should work towards achieving health workforce self-sufficiency". On the other hand the other part of the paper seems to be arguing for better retention and use of non-EU doctors. There is a lot of interesting data in the paper and the overall model in Figure 3 is useful. However, data presumably exists on the reasons for Brain drain I and the views of the non-EU doctors contribute little to this. What is more interesting and new is the apparent link between brain wastage and what is referred to as "Brain drain II". The discussion could be around whether the "big wall" around the consultant posts (which leads to Brain drain II) might be a deliberate ploy by the health service managers (and possibly the Irish medical profession) to keep the 'service posts' staffed - especially as recruitment is relatively cheap. It could be noted that while this may be a convenient short-term solution, it is contrary to the WHO code on international recruitment and if the European Commission is correct the solution will become increasingly unsustainable.

Methods

2. Figures 2 and 3 need more explanation and justification.

3. The selection criteria for the non-EU doctors is not provided explained. This should specify whether doctors from the 57 countries identified as having critical shortages of health workers (World Health Report 2006) are included or not, as 'brain wastage' is particularly pertinent for these countries.

4. The main topics included in the interviews should be described and justified in relation to the concept in Figure 3.

5. More description of the data analysis process is needed the use of software.

Minor essential revisions
6. The term "destination country" needs to be explained briefly and referenced. Also the term "brain waste".

7. The meaning of the following sentence should be made clearer. "Doctor migration has been cited as the 'acid test' for assessing the impact of skilled emigration (or brain drain) on source countries [8], given the financial cost to source countries [10]."

8. A brief explanation of why is the feminisation of the workforce a "challenge" should be provided.

9. The implications of the findings (bottom of p8) should be moved to the Discussion section.

10. Explain from whose perspective the structure of the medical workforce is considered a failure (p9).

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

**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 that I have no competing interests