Reviewer's report

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

Version: 1 Date: 1 August 2013

Reviewer: Irene Glinos

Reviewer's report:

Minor Essential Revisions

Content-wise the paper is excellent; it deals with key issues affecting health systems and their workforces, and is original, well-researched and well-written. The methods section, the presentation of findings (results vs. interpretation) and the internal organisation of the paper should however be revised. Please see detailed comments below. The authors should address these before publication.

1. Title: appears vague and does not reflect the content of paper. Suggestion to mention the qualitative study.

2. Abstract: results and discussion paragraph: correct last word to ‘drain’ (not gain).

3. Background: research question, purpose and outline of paper are missing from the Introduction. Suggestion to move paragraph “This article presents…” (last paragraph in section “Where do Migrant doctors…”) to become last paragraph of Background. Paragraph should also mention that paper presents primary data from in-depth interviews. Also add outline of paper here – and remove it from first paragraph of Results (“The discussion and conclusion sections will…..”).

4. Terminology, “Doctor Migration and Workforce Planning” section, second paragraph: what is difference between ‘internationally trained’ (nurses) and ‘non-EU migrant’ (doctors)? Why use different terminology? Suggestion to move footnote 4 to this paragraph.

5. Figure 1: explain terms:
   a) Doctors in training: do they have their basic and specialised medical degrees? Are they the same as interns? Or are they the same as junior hospital doctors? And what degrees have junior hospital doctors completed?
   b) What are Registrars and SpR?
   c) What are Consultants? (non-Anglophone audience not necessarily familiar with term)
   d) Suggestion to explain all professional titles/definitions used in paper in a single place.

6. Methods: should be improved. Information is missing on the purpose of interviews (link to research question?), on the development of interview grids/questionnaires, and on how themes were extracted. Consider dividing into
sub-sections e.g. ‘study population’, ‘questionnaire development’, ‘data collection’ etc for clarity.

7. Methods, first paragraph: suggestion to present all data on respondents in a table. Clarify what ‘recently emigrated’ means. Any data on respondents’ age? Did they work mainly in Dublin or elsewhere? Were any interview candidates contacted but declined to take part?


9. Results: section is confusing as it mixes interview findings with interpretation, discussion points, and literature. Suggestion to only present results from the primary data collection, and move all other arguments and references to Discussion.

10. Results, first paragraph: entire paragraph seems to be interpretation.

11. In two quotes Doctor 18 talks about ‘they’. Is he/she not a non-EU migrant doctor??


13. Discussion: section is well-written but arguments could be more closely connected to the findings. Interview findings are not used/discussed to their full potential.

14. Balance of paper: the three sections preceding Methods are content-wise very good but somewhat long (two pages). Consider moving some arguments to the Discussion. Both Discussion and Conclusions could be expanded to improve balance.

15. Conclusions: make clear how paper contributes to existing evidence.

16. Conclusions, last line: suggestion to add ‘workforce’ i.e. “greatest workforce challenge…” since the Irish health system faces other significant challenges (e.g. budget cuts).

Minor issues not for publication

1. Numbering of figures: Figures 2+3 cited earlier in text than Figure 1. Consider renumbering.

2. ‘Methods’ should be new main heading

3. Methods, first paragraph: numbers are written in letters and in numerals. Suggestion to be consistent.

4. Methods, second paragraph: precede numbers in brackets by n= to distinguish from references in square brackets, i.e. (n=33).

5. Discussion, fourth paragraph: first quote is by Glinos et al.

Discretionary Revisions

1. Headings “Doctor Migration and Workforce Planning” and “Recruitment and Retention” could be more illustrative and closer connected to text. Consider revising. Also, are these sub-sections of Background?
2. Discussion, third paragraph: On the EWTD, briefly mention what maximum the Directive sets to compare with the 75h/week junior hospital doctors work?

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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.