Reviewer's report

Title: Supervision, support and mentoring interventions for health practitioners in rural and remote areas: a systematic review and thematic synthesis of the literature to identify key mechanisms for successful outcomes

Version: 1 Date: 25 September 2013

Reviewer: Lesley Barclay

Reviewer's report:

Is the question posed original, important or well defined?

Important question; overdue and under researched. The paper confirms the importance of new work needed in introducing and evaluating systems for mentoring and supporting rurally located health workers.

Are the data sound and well controlled?

Yes. The authors have been systematic and thorough in the process they have used in this review.

Is the interpretation (discussion and conclusion) well balanced and supported by the data?

The interpretation is sound. It distinguishes the differences between support interventions that are training centred and the dearth of interventions that focus on retention of workers and their development. This is a broader focus than simply on skills acquisition.

Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to allow others to evaluate and/or replicate the work?

This is a thorough approach to refining data from published papers to establish a synthesis that is publishable in a paper. This process is well described and developed.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the method?

This is a systematic and thematic review of literature. It does not go further than this and does what it purports to do well.

Can the writing, organisation, tables and figures be improved?

The paper is well written. The context is well established and located in the literature. The presentation is sound.

When revisions are requested

I do not believe there are revisions required.
Are there any ethical or competing interests issues you would like to raise?
I do not believe that there are ethical or competing interest issues to raise.

**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 I have no competing interests.