Reviewer's report

Title: The Implications of the Feminization of the Primary Care Physician Workforce on Service Supply: a Systematic Review

Version: 1 Date: 10 November 2013

Reviewer: Helena Britt

Reviewer's report:

It was a pleasure to read this paper (and this is very unusual!). It is well written and well structured. The research questions are clearly stated, the search mechanisms well described, and the discussion is of good quality.

Major revisions: None

Introduction: good.

1. Minor revisions

Results:

1. I think that sometimes you need to state the year of the study when reporting an individual finding. For example page 13: "Out of Office" Section on Keane. This was written in 1991 (22 years ago). Perhaps you should say, 'In 1991, Kean et al reported'. (Note the tense correction here as well). Check other for the same issue please.

1.2 Correction: Page 13 first full para: Bensing found no difference in referrals, so I think you must mean Australian study (when you say "Like Bensing et al") in this para.

Discussion:

Comment only: I was very glad to see you recognised the limitation of the search, in that there are many studies that investigate (for example) length of consultation, patient mix, morbidity managed etc, where the sex of the GP is an outcome measure, which of course you have not picked up. I assume this is part of the lead authors PhD, and suggest that searches on these subjects are also needed to ensure full coverage of the available literature in the thesis.

1.3 There is one point you have failed to understand. You suggest (with some horror) that many of the studies included did not use statistics to control for confounders. Statistical methods for this process only became mainstream in the late 80s early 90s. And from memory I think the Britt paper was one of the first to apply them to the question of the sex of the GP. There is no reason to forgive lack of adjustment in more recent papers, but there is reason to accept that these were very new methods in the mid 1990s. Please add something to recognise the development of statistical methods over the period of the literature review.
2. Minor editorial comments.

Page 19 middle of first para of section 4.3:
"or it may be that this has not historically been true (note you have split you infinitive here - put historically before 'this'), trends over time suggest it might become so'.

This needs to be reworded. I think if you take out 'Or it may be that" the sentence will be OK.

Page 14 3.2.5 lines 1-2: sentence needs to be read twice to make sense. Try putting a bracket round the last section (rather than in small.....).

In any case you can't start a sentence with a conjunctive (Or).

Practice is the verb, practice is the noun. Please correct.

You 'compare to' throughout the paper. This should be "compared with".

....'More ....... compared with..... Incorrect, the term is more than or less than. This is easy to check mentally, having mentally removed the other words.

For example: Last para p16, last 2 lines: ...'spent more time on unwaged childcare and other household responsibilities compared to'. Remove the bit about time and household responsibilities, and it becomes clear this should be 'than' rather than 'compared' with.

Watch your tense. In the discussion you are inclined to switch tenses. For example p 16 For example at the beginning of page 17 you use "are accounted for" when the study WAS past tense. Authors contribution: Last line. I think you mean they all gave approval of the publication of this version of the PAPER, rather than the study.

Figures: clear
Overall, well done.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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 declare that I have no competing interests