Reviewer's report

Title: Mapping human resources for eye health in sub-Saharan Africa: current progress towards VISION 2020

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Reviewer: Susan Lewallen

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The authors have made improvement in the text. I still have two major concerns requiring compulsory minor revisions.

1. I continue to believe that the comparison of good data to questionable targets weakens the paper. As the authors note, policy makers will rely on the paper’s conclusions and they need to understand that the targets are only best estimates, based on little evidence. Authors can help keep this in the reader’s mind by consistently using some qualification such as “suggested targets” to emphasize the questionable nature of the targets.

   The authors write, “Interestingly, while Sub Sahara meets ¾ of the …requirement, CSR is only 1/4 ..the target.” This discrepancy is indeed interesting and deserves some explanation; it is an excellent opportunity to reiterate the need to question the HReH targets. Obviously something doesn’t add up. (The statement that the impact of task shifting will be explored in a companion paper does not explain the discrepancy.)

2. The authors define “cataract surgeons” on page 12 specifically as a non physician cadre but persist in classifying the physicians who perform cataract surgery in Madagascar and DRC as “cataract surgeons”, albeit with some explanation provided. In view of the debate over non physician cataract surgeons in Africa, the unique nature of the cadre, and the large differences (described in a previous review) between physician and non physician cataracts surgeons, it is important to be very clear. The term “non physician cataract surgeons” should be used when it applies. The authors can differentiate the “cataract surgeons” of Madagascar and DRC from “ophthalmologists” by referring to the former as “physician cataract surgeons”. This clarification needs to be provided every time the term “cataract surgeon” is used. (e.g., page 16, how many of the 363 “cataract surgeons” are physicians?; page 17, how many of the DRC “cataract surgeons” are physicians) In Conclusions the authors state that “The development of a new intermediate cadre, cataract surgeons…one solution.” Are they suggesting physicians or non physicians or both?

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field