Reviewer’s report

Title: A scenario planning approach to human resources for health: the case of community pharmacists in Portugal

Version: 1 Date: 3 June 2014

Reviewer: Moira O’Connor

Reviewer’s report:

This is a very interesting manuscript on a pertinent topic, which is of interest internationally. The methodology is original and provides a very useful way of looking at possible scenarios for the community pharmacist in the future, as well as the tensions facing the profession. However, the structure of the manuscript does not do justice to the ideas presented and needs substantial work. I summarise my points below then I answer the questions posed by the journal.

Background

The 1st section needs to be expanded as it reads like a series of dot points. The 1st 3 paragraphs should be condensed into one as currently the first paragraph has 4 lines and 2 sentences and the others are also very brief. The key arguments should be presented and expanded upon to lead to the main research question(s). Section 2 (para 4) could go first as this helps set the scene. There should be more on the international changes and tensions (some of which closely mirror the national challenges highlighted in this manuscript).

The 2nd heading could be better framed as the local context. The authors could take some of para 5 and put into here but that is my preference and that decision is up to the authors.

The objectives could be reworded as research questions and would be better placed before methods. These objectives are too wordy and need to be tightened substantially.

Methods

This section needs to be restructured and tightened as it is extremely difficult for the reader to follow. The information needed is probably all there (though I would not be sure of that) but it is all mixed up.

One way to do this would be to follow the usual format for a scientific report: Start with phase or stage 1 then follow with the other phases or stages. For each stage/phase state what it is (e.g. literature review), who the participants were (if applicable), precisely what was done (method), how it was done (process or procedure), and how analysed.

Results
Again this section needs to be restructured. It appears that the authors have themes, then tensions, then scenarios for the future. If this is correct then label these sections and make sure the order is clear.

Discussion
Once again the interesting results are obscured by a lack of organisation and structure in this section.

Conclusions
This section is better organised but some of the information here should be in the discussion. For example, the communication issue is an implication of more than one of the scenarios (2nd last para). Also see:


Questions
1. Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined?
   The question is novel but needs to be clearer.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replicate the work?
   The information is all there but needs to be re-organised

3. Are the data sound and well controlled?
   N/A

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
   N/A

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
   The discussion appears to reflect the findings but it is unclear at present as the discussion needs to be re-organised

6. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
   No abstract. The title is fine.

7. Is the writing acceptable?
   The manuscript needs to be edited to be acceptable. E.g. paras 1-3 have several grammatical errors

Line 3 - ....and health services, being an effective tool should be as an effective tool
Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

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