Reviewer's report

Title: The public sector nursing workforce in Kenya - a county level analysis

Version: 2 Date: 15 July 2013

Reviewer: Jean M Moore

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Major Compulsory Revisions

While this paper provides very important information about the nursing workforce in Kenya, there are a number of concerns with the analysis that are outlined below and should be addressed in a revision:

1) There is no explanation of differences in scope of practice for the three levels of nursing. Are BScNs allowed to do the same things as the two and a half-year trained enrolled nurse? Can differences in allowable tasks affect their ability to impact on health outcomes (e.g., giving immunizations?)

2) For readers unfamiliar with Kenya's public sector health system, it would be helpful to describe it. In the manuscript, national referral hospitals are mentioned but their roles are not well described. The basis for excluding the nurses who work there is unclear.

3) While the article clearly states that this is about the public-sector nursing workforce, the impacts analysis looks at outcomes for the entire population (immunization rates). This could be misleading without a fuller explanation of the private sector in health care as well as the nursing workforce in that sector and the sorts of services they provide. Are immunizations only available from public sector providers? This is unclear and somewhat confusing.

4) The conclusion cites that there is a shortage of nurses when compared to the standard of 2.5 per 1,000 which was stated in the opening sentence of the background, but that was defined as including doctors, nurses and midwives. If you are referring to another standard, then it should be cited.

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.