Reviewer's report

Title: Optimizing Human Resource Management: Lessons from the Georgian National Immunization Program.

Version: 1 Date: 24 June 2006

Reviewer: Ellen E. Nolte

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General

Countries emerging from the former Soviet Union continue to face considerable challenges in reforming their health care systems, and there is a need to better understand the consequences for the healthcare workforce so as to identify strategies for successful reform. The present analysis aims to describe current human resource management practices in Georgia, using the Georgian immunization programme as an example. It could therefore make an important contribution to the emerging evidence on potential benefits of more effective human resource management.

However, there are some aspects to the study as presented in the manuscript that the authors are invited to consider so as to improve its quality further:

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Introduction/Background

1. The introduction/background is somewhat long and could benefit from shortening by focusing on the key aspects relevant to the subject of the paper, in particular as it relates to the background description of health care reform in Georgia (p. 6-8), with some unnecessary repetition of an earlier description in the introduction section (p. 4/5).

Research objective

2. The stated research objective is “to assess and document the current state of the National Immunization Program (NIP) in Georgia and to identify human resource management practices” however, the study as presented in the manuscript focuses on human resources management practices within NIP; the NIP as such is not being assessed and/or documented. This needs to be clarified.

Methods

3. Human resource management (HRM) is at the centre of the study, yet it not clear how HRM is being defined and there is also a need to specify the underlying conceptual framework, in particular as it relates to the dimensions of HRM the authors seek to assess (p. 10, survey indicators and p. 11, “research topics™ for focus groups). The authors are thus asked to provide a concise description of the theoretical framework guiding their analysis of HRM.

4. Sampling/survey: it is not clear how randomization of districts and healthcare workers was undertaken. Also, there needs to be a description of how refusal to participate (if any) was addressed.

5. How were the participants of focus groups selected? Where these part of the intervention or control group? What was their size/composition (e.g. ratio CPH managers “ facility heads/workers)?

Results

6. The results section requires a basic description of the sample (and focus groups) as it relates to age, sex, urban-rural; how representative is the sample for the workforce population in the NIP programme (e.g. response rate?).
Discussion

7. It is difficult to assess the overall findings of the present paper because of the lack of a conceptual/theoretical framework guiding through the analysis. The overall conclusions derived by the authors seem to be very reasonable, however, they do not necessarily flow from the findings of this analysis, mainly because of many assumptions underlying the analysis have not been clearly described, thus undermining the overall quality of the paper.

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

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.