Reviewer's report

Title: Workforce participation among international medical graduates in the National Health Service of England: a retrospective longitudinal study

Version: 1 Date: 20 November 2007

Reviewer: Christopher Ricketts

Reviewer's report:

General
1. This paper presents the results from a very large number of doctors. It aims to contribute to improved workforce planning by looking at the retention of international medical graduates in the UK workforce. Given the comments in the recent draft Tooke Report (http://www.mmcinquiry.org.uk/) any contribution to improved workforce planning should be welcomed.

2. The statistical methodology using survival analysis is appropriate because of censoring of the data. That is, the start of an episode is always known, but not the end. Because the study uses census (population) data rather than a sampling approach, hypothesis tests are neither appropriate nor used.

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

3. Table 2 and Figure 2 need further consideration. The authors have made no mention of the fact that a doctor’s age at entry into the workforce may be influenced by the pattern of medical training in each of the countries or areas under investigation. For example, US training is 4 years postgraduate which is different from the UK. How does this affect any observed age effects? Doctors from different training regimes will be limited in the age at which they could enter the workforce. Figure 2 may not be very effective when printed.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

4. The authors exclude any doctors currently in the workforce in 1991 because their date of entry was unknown. These data are therefore censored in a different way (end point may be known but start point isn’t). Can the authors say anything about how comparable this group is?

5. The division of countries into those which give better retention than UK-trained doctors and those which give worse retention is helpful. The relationship between median retention and home country economic factors is also interesting, but the
range of factors considered is very limited.

**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.