Reviewer’s report

Title: Eye Care Workforce Availability in Enugu Urban, Southeastern Nigeria: a cross-sectional survey.

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Reviewer: Ummuro Adano

Reviewer’s report:

1. This is an interesting and useful article in the field of eye care delivery. It dwells on the implications of human resource development and availability, one of the three components of VISION 2020, to provide quality eye care in the Enugu region of Nigeria.

2. The study design and methodology are sound, well controlled and relevant. The authors have also analyzed the data correctly and made some generally useful interpretation of the results.

3. Essential revisions:

Although the study’s main conclusion seems to be the mal-distribution of eye care health workers, particularly between urban and rural Enugu, there is insufficient discussion of the factors fueling this trend and recommendations for tackling this challenge – apart from citing previous studies that have also generated similar conclusions. In other words, there is little evidence from the study to make any new or additional contributions or body of knowledge that will guide HRH policy planners and decision-makers regarding key aspects of human resource development for eye care delivery. Most attention has been paid to the number of service providers, described as the number of ophthalmologists or other eye care providers per population ratios. While these indicators illustrate some of the deficiencies and staffing imbalances that exist, they fail to provide important information needed by planners, donors, and training centers to select, train, equip, supervise, and support eye health staff. Lately, all the available evidence seems to suggest that many of the ways in which human resources for health are trained, deployed, and managed have reduced their availability, performance and productivity.

As such, just recommending an audit of existing staff may not deal with the mal-distribution challenge when perhaps performance of health workers, defined as adherence to an accepted standard or guideline, may also be inadequate. As in other areas of health care, poor performance will likely contribute to low use of health facilities by those in need. Often, poor performance is assumed to be due to lack of knowledge and skills, and as a consequence, most interventions have concentrated on training or attending courses with mixed or disappointing results. On the other hand, for example, assessing the factors that determine the performance of cataract surgeons trained in East Africa has led to improvements in the planning of training activities and determining the best strategies for
improving the performance and productivity of the few existing ophthalmologic surgeons.

Similarly, perhaps a new staffing model or task shifting that relies more on cadre of midlevel eye care personnel may be needed to fill in the gaps in rural settings where there are few ophthalmologists. Such analysis will be useful to the policy planners of Enugu who are likely to utilize the results of this study.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**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.