Reviewer's report

Title: Developing a Tool to Measure Health Worker Motivation in District Hospitals in Kenya

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Reviewer: Bruno Marchal

Reviewer's report:

1. General remarks
This paper addresses performance of health workers, an important topic in the current debate of health workforce management and calls due attention to the dimension of motivation. It does so from within a research project with a concern to assess how motivation may affect actual practice of health workers and as such the outcomes of an intervention.

Based on the few studies that have been carried out on motivation of health workers in LMIC, the authors set out to develop a framework to measure motivation. The theoretical foundations are thus well exposed, which is rarely done in the management literature. It also responds to a knowledge gap, i.e. the lack of research into development of methods to (quantitatively) assess levels of motivation.

It could be argued that still more research is needed in the determinants of motivation and its outcomes in terms of actual behaviour, and particularly how these may vary in function of context elements such as degree of professionalisation, management practice, power relations, social conditions and general culture, etc. Furthermore, in searching to quantify levels of motivation may lie a risk, in the sense that to measure levels of motivation, one must know what drives health workers and how their motivation shows up in practice.
Furthermore, a single measure of level of motivation at one facility necessarily reduces the interest of such measure for managers. In aggregating an assessment of levels of motivation of individuals into one single measure, the variation in motivation between individuals, between cadres or between units is lost and therefore, such methods may be interesting for research but far less for managers. In this sense, easy to use tools based on mixed methods would be quite interesting.

The writers do acknowledge most of these issues both in the introduction and the discussion section, and clearly indicate the explorative nature of their work and the limits to the external validity of their findings. Therefore, besides some few typos, I do not see any reason for any revision.

2. Methodology and data
I would like to disqualify myself from assessing the statistical analysis. Data and methods are well described.
4. Overall, from a writing perspective, the whole paper is well written.

3. Discussion and conclusion
The discussion is balanced and the authors clearly indicate the context specificity of the development of the tool, i.e. the Kenyan context, the limits (e.g. selection bias by taking well-performing hospitals) and that care should be taken in the interpretation of such index score. The authors also highlight the fact that levels of self-reported behaviours do not automatically lead to better hospital performance. Finally, they put their findings and their tool in perspective.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**
I declare that I have no competing interests.