Reviewer’s report

Title: Where do students from different disciplines want to work?

Version: 1 Date: 5 March 2009

Reviewer: Laurie brown

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Major compulsory revisions
1. The research question posed by this paper ‘where do students from different disciplines want to work’ is straightforward in itself but absolutely crucial in terms of the implications for future workforce planning especially in rural and remote areas where the recruitment and retention of the health workforce is so problematic. The findings of this paper will be of interest to the readership of HRH. However, the authors need to make their research questions explicit in both the abstract and paper e.g. what are the actual research questions, how exactly does these ‘add substantially to previous research’?

2. HRH is an international journal. This research seems to be written for an Australian not an international audience. A little more information about Australia needs to be provided and the research findings interpreted within the Australian context.

3. The data used in the research are from the ‘Careers in Rural Health Tracking Survey’. More background information needs to be provided on this survey and who the participants are. For example, the respondents are students on rural placement at the Northern Rivers University Department of Rural Health, the northern (coastal) NSW. This placement differs among disciplines, universities and year of study/stage of training.

4. Is there any difference in the basic characteristics of the students who participated versus who did not participate in the CRHTS (is some of this data available given they are on placement at NRUDRH)?

5. Is there some bias in these students’ rural background? i.e. does this rural placement scheme attract more students from regional and rural backgrounds because only 40% reported they came from a capital city or major urban area which is considerably lower than the national average.

6. Has the placement experience influenced these students’ responses? Figure 4 indicates a very positive response rate for areas around the north coast area of NSW. The effects of rural placement are introduced in the conclusion and this needs to be explored more in the paper and especially in interpreting the findings.

7. The results for medical students differ significantly from allied health students. To what extent is this a discipline versus demographic or other effect. For
example, more medical students are from a foreign background or from a capital or major urban centre so perhaps it is not surprising medical students are unsure about working outside urban centres.

8. With respect to Table 1, would the authors please provide an age range as well as the average; does married include those who are partnered by not married?; and how is foreign ancestry defined?

Discretionary revisions

9. The discussion and conclusion provides important commentary on the policy implications of the research findings. Perhaps a little more could be made of the importance of students’ background, age and timing as factors influencing locational career choices. Also I agree given that many students are unsure about working in rural/remote areas, there is an opportunity for appropriately targeted incentives to encourage these students to join the rural health workforce. The authors could indicate how consistent their results are with the findings of other studies.

**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.