Reviewer's report

Title: Burnout and training satisfaction of Greek residents: will the European Work Time Directive make a difference?

Version: 1 Date: 9 December 2009

Reviewer: Jelle T. Prins

Reviewer's report:

Dear authors,

The editor of the HRH asked me to review your article in an open peer review process. I gratefully accept this opportunity to give feedback on the article; “Burnout and training satisfaction on Greek residents; will the European Work Time Directive make a difference?”.

First of all I like to thank the authors for their contribution on research on burnout in the medical setting. To my opinion this is a subject which deserves more attention not only because of the impact it has for the medical professionals but also the impact it has on the quality of care for patients. It is also interesting to put more European research on this topic together as all members of the European Union have to deal with the EWTD. The authors started this with a first step which must be encouraged more widely in Europe.

I would like to give my feedback by the format given to me.

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?

I think the authors formulated a well standing research question, which also is visible in the title of the paper. They present the reason for doing and publishing this research in a very good way.

However they also present to much assumption in the background the paragraph. For example the second section in the background is filled with statements which the authors which they don’t make plausible to the reader. It seems that this are individual experiences. Please add some good references to this part.

The last sentence in the second section of the background which starts with Thus, it can be concluded…..
To my opinion the authors here jump to conclusions which can not be made referring to the text. Once again is seems to me that the authors do not differ that much between scientifically research en private opinions. Please consider to be more scientifically on this point.

In the part of the text about the ETWD please add a date of writing in the text, Also please explain the last sentence of this section where I think the authors do not make their point clear to the reader.

In the first paragraph of the background it should be more appropriate to refer on two reviews on burnout among medical residents by Thomas and by Prins et al.

In the objectives section the authors clearly state their aims of the study. However that last aim namely to delineate the status of Greek residents with regard to burnout is far beyond the scope of the article. To my opinion the article is a scientifically paper and not a political statement. Although I can agree with the authors on the challenging demands in the Greek medical environment I think they have to create an other platform for their personal and political opinions and stick in this paper only to the scientifically output.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?

The diagnosis of burnout is trivial. As described by Brenninkmeijer V, van Ypereren N. How to conduct research on burnout: advantages and disadvantages of a unidimensional approach in burnout research. Occup Environ Med 2003;60:16-20, the way the authors diagnose burnout is not usual. It gives a overestimation of burnout. Please use the calculation as described in the reference given before. Using it will give a smaller amount of burnout in the population.

This means that in all sections the prevalence of burnout has to be changed!

The statistic analyses chosen were satisfactory for the purpose they were used for.

3. Are the data sound?

Yes it seems to me that the data are sound and well described in the paper.

It is strange to my opinion that no significant correlates were found between demographics, EWTD etc and burnout. As known from literature depersonalization always shows a difference between men and women. Please check if you have done the right statistics. If so please add if the outcomes differ from what is found in literature. Furthermore as no relationship is established between burnout and EWTD the authors have to be very careful in their conclusions on EWTD and burnout.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data
deposition?

See under bullet two for a better way to determine burnout levels.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
Please check the discussion on the right prevalence of burnout.
Please be more extensive on why the residents in your study performed better as a group of general practitioners this is odd as may be expected that those in training (residents) are less personal accomplished as people who finished their training.
Please remove the whole policy implications section. It is not in balance with the rest of the paper and as stated before I do not think this section must be in a scientifically paper, although I can imagine and can agree the content of it.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
Yes it is described properly.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
Authors can be more consequent in putting references in the article and the authors missed some good reviews on this topic.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
Yes

9. Is the writing acceptable?
I will be unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions. In this stage I would be inclined to reject the article also because of the political focus.
The manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician. Furthermore I declare that I have no competing interest'.

With kind regards,
Jelle T. Prins (PhD)

Level of interest: An article of interest
Quality of written English: No improvements necessary
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'
Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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'