**Reviewer’s report**

**Title:** Challenges in physician supply planning: the case study of Belgium

**Version:** 1 **Date:** 14 January 2010

**Reviewer:** Lud van der Velden

**Reviewer’s report:**

- **Major Compulsory Revisions**

  1. As a “case study of Belgium”, this article seems to include too much information on other countries in the case description section. The methods section implies a systematic review of international literature on manpower planning, but the article is not. I recommend clarifying the study design and the method followed.

  2. The case description section is also overloaded with elements that would better be addressed in the discussion section. Each heading within the case description section looks a bit like a result-and-discussion section. This does not help in making it a clear article.

  3. It seems as though the article is meant as a kind of summary of the KCE-report “Physician workforce supply in Belgium: current situation and challenges”. This report is an impressive piece of work, but the “summary” they made for this article is not very readable. It misses a lot of detail information that is necessary to really appreciate the complexity of the task of planning and monitoring the workforce. It would be better to focus on just a few elements, instead of describing and discussing everything that is included in this article.

  4. In the introduction it is stated that they will examine the hypothesis of inadequate or inadequately implemented policies instead of examining deficiencies in the forecasting tools. I think that would be a good idea. But a significant part of the article is concerned with data and modelling issues.

  5. Perhaps the most intriguing question is: after having decided on a numerus clausus of 700 for the total intake in the training schemes for medical graduates with a specific distribution by general and specialist training and by region, what policies were developed to reach these targets and what were their effects? Phrased differently: what went wrong with the implementation process to reach the desired target? The article would profit from addressing this issue.

  6. Finally, it does not follow from the results presented that “a global manpower picture” with “comparable manpower databases” from different countries and “integrating manpower planning” with service and financial planning is a prerequisite for an effective HRH planning. Although I believe that a comprehensive model is a kind of ideal to be strived for, manpower planning should also be done with the least parameters possible.

- **Minor Essential Revisions**
- Discretionary Revisions
None

**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