Reviewer's report

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

Version: 2 Date: 30 April 2010

Reviewer: Lud van der Velden

Reviewer's report:

- Major Compulsory Revisions

Although the article gained in coherence, it still needs some restructuring.

It is not really a classical case study and therefore it is probably impossible to follow the editorial instructions for case study articles. But it should at least have an abstract.

The introduction section states more or less explicitly that the article will not be about modeling and data issues but on implementation issues. But some of the paragraphs in the case description and the discussion section still are on modeling and data issues. Although it is not explicitly mentioned as a key challenge, “setting the right numbers” seems to be presented as one of the key challenges. This should be clarified and the decision will have consequences for the article.

If “setting the right numbers” is not intended as one of the key challenges that will be discussed, some of the information under this heading should be removed at all or be placed in the introduction section. It should also be removed from the discussion section.

However, if “setting the right numbers” is intended as one of the key challenges it could be maintained. But then the last three paragraphs should be moved to the discussion section.

The information on “medical training in Belgium” should not be part of the “Case study”, because it is not mentioned as part of the objective to describe key challenges. It should be part of the introduction.

Maybe it would be good to restructure the article according to the following scheme.

Add an abstract

Mention five key challenges in the introduction section: (1) setting the right numbers, (2) fulfilling the quotas, (3) specialty imbalances, (4) geographical imbalances and (5) international mobility. State that the objectives are (a) to identify the specific challenges for each of these key challenges, (b) to describe the solutions used in Belgium, (c) the solutions used in other countries and (d) the lessons to be learned. Add some information on the medical training in
Belgium in the introduction section.

The five key challenges could be the headings in the results or case description section. Under each heading there could be four subheadings: (a) the specific challenges for each heading, (b) the solutions used in Belgium, (c) the solutions used in other countries and (d) the lessons to be learned.

Limit the discussion and conclusion section to a short summary of the lessons to be learned.

- Minor Essential Revisions

The article has to be checked on spelling. For the first three pages, my suggestions are:

“highlighted [6]” instead of “highlighted it [6]”

“from international benchmarking” instead of “from an international benchmarking”

“gradually smooth” instead of “smooth gradually”

“The latter proportion” instead of “This last proportion”

“on the workforce” instead of “on the manpower workforce”

“GPs were not based” instead of “GPs will not more be based”

“specialists has to be trained” instead of “specialists have to be trained”

**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