Reviewer's report

Title: Advancing the application of systems thinking in health: exploring dual practice and its management in Kampala, Uganda

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Reviewer: Jean Macq

Reviewer's report:

I read with interest the article entitled « advancing the application of system thinking in health : exploring dual practice and its management in Kampala, Uganda »

This paper is generally well written (though some further editing might be need to correct some sentences). The structure allows for a clear understanding of the issue tackled and the way it was approached.

The question posed by the author is not so new (i.e. dual practice) but utilization of CLD is innovative and gives a clear picture of a deeply complex issue. Further to that, it may be useful to clarify:

1) types of dual practices (it appear at first glance that it concerns public-private clinical practices, but then works In NGO or research project is mentioned)
2) Type of private providers (difference between PFP and PNFP is not enough mentioned in the introduction)

The methods is well described and is sufficient

The way results are presented does not allow enough to differentiate the different stakeholders' perspectives (i.e. at least national policy makers, local managers and providers involved in dual practice). I would structure it better so as to highlight sources of consensus or disagreements between stakeholders.

Results may also be shorten, i.e. by reducing “quotes”

Discussion and conclusion is globally interesting. However,

1) I would strengthen the link with CAS perspective, particularly in relation to auto-organization processes observed around dual practice informal regulation.
2) As a detail, I would also re-take the point raised on the “quote” from p6 – i.e. the internal conflict felt by providers between the need to increase income and the proudness to provide high quality public health care services.

On the conclusion, rather to formalize “informal policies”, I would suggest the promotion of policies that encourage the design of mutual adjustments / informal arrangement, and that may be conducive to accessible and good quality public health care services, while allowing for sufficient income for the providers.
Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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