Reviewer’s report

Title: The perceived impact of family physicians on the district health system in South Africa: a cross-sectional survey

Version: 0 Date: 24 Aug 2017

Reviewer: JAMES AMISI

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting article that affirms the need for research evidence in an African context. I agree with the authors thoughts that evidence of the FP impact will contribute to decision making not only in the context of South Africa but also the rest of Africa where research in this area is mostly lacking. The findings however should be interpreted with the caveat that perceived impact is not necessarily similar to the actual impact of the FPs in their fields.

The background, design and objectives are appropriate.

The methods are clear and reproducible although I noted some inconsistencies between the information in the abstract and that in the main text. The abstract states that 16 respondents were contacted to complete the 360 degree impact assessment tool per every FP enrolled, the main text however talks of 15 respondents. Please clarify on this issue. It is also not clear from the methods section why FPs working at regional or tertiary Hospital, those working at District level or in the private sector were excluded. I think in my view their exclusion may have affected the findings of your study. I have noted that 14 FPs (8.1%) were respondents in a study assessing the impact of their own cadre, don't you think this introduces some bias.

I am in agreement with the implications of the findings of your study more so on the use of the impact assessment tool to evaluate perceived impact of FPs in other African or LMIC health systems. Lastly the explanation for the exclusion of the some 2 provinces out of 9 in the study is reasonable.
Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I am able to assess the statistics

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

Declaration of competing interests
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?
If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

I declare that I have no competing interests

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal