Reviewer’s report

Title: Identifying policies and strategies for GP retention in direct patient care in the United Kingdom: a RAND/UCLA Appropriateness Method Panel study

Version: 0 Date: 22 Jan 2019

Reviewer: Michelle Howard

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this manuscript. It provides new information on an important topic, building on the authors' synthesis of existing knowledge about policies and strategies to address the shortage of GPs in the UK. I would expect the results to be of interest to readers in the UK and other countries with similar health care systems where GPs are primary providers.

The methods seem suitable for the purpose and stage of this inquiry. They are reported in enough detail to be critiqued and replicated. The results are also appropriately presented. My only comments relate to some minor points of clarification and ease of reading:

1. The introduction could be more concise, with a summary of the previous work without going into specific details e.g. the numbers of interventions previously tested. It would be enough to state that the evidence of what is effective for GP retention is spare and of low quality. If the specific details are needed, it would be helpful to directly link them to the study objectives and hypotheses.

2. The methods are very thorough, but very long (7.5 pages). I needed to read them twice to fully understand. Perhaps a brief overview of the steps at the start would be helpful.

3. There is jargon used that may not be understood by some readers e.g. GP Partners, Medical Performers List.

4. Could you provide more information about the perspectives the different participants brought? E.g. were GP partners contributing the perspective of the average practicing GP? Which of the participants were in positions of decision-making?

5. It may be better to describe the creation of the list of strategies first, before the sampling methods and survey administration. I would see the creation of the materials as a different concept from 'Data collection' where it is currently written.
6. Pg 12 line 53-55- what was the reasoning behind using a narrower band because these were policy decisions rather than informing clinical decision-making?

7. The reporting of the results was very technical and difficult to extract meaning, whereas I found the discussion much easier to understand and presented information I had not gleaned from reading the results. There is a lot of information for the reader to digest. Consider using some of the descriptions in the Discussion, within the results.

8. I didn't understand the implications for research and practice. Research has focused on financial, personal and professional support for GPs, yet many of these policy strategies also focused on these issues. I am not sure of the distinction the authors are making.

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.

Unable to assess

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.

Not relevant to this manuscript

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 organization 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