Reviewer's report

Title: The influences of background on beginning medical students' perceptions of rural medical practice.

Version: 3  Date: 5 January 2015

Reviewer: Christopher P. Morley

Reviewer's report:

The revised manuscript is improved dramatically from the previous iteration, and is, in my estimation, almost ready for publication. I would mention only minor essential and discretionary revisions the authors and editor may want to consider.

Overall, however, this is a very valuable paper that makes a good contribution to the literature on the recruitment and selection of future rural physicians into medical school. Moreover, it is written in a way that it will be a useful addition for both Australian and North American readers, and probably others as well.

Minor Essential Revisions:

1. There were one or two spelling/typographical errors. A quick copy-edit is in order (nothing serious).

2. Some more description of the sample, with a bit more elaboration and characterization of the students who elected not to have their essays included in the research study would be helpful. This does not need to be extensive, and might even be accomplished with a few sentences, somewhere near the beginning of the results section.

Discretionary revisions

3. Students from rural areas do not communicate in the same way as those from urban or suburban areas - this has long been described in the literature, and this study provides additional evidence to that effect. However, in the conclusions, the authors suggest that an answer is more TRAINING of interviewers at medical schools. I would insist that some consideration be given in this paper to actually altering the composition of interviewer pools and admissions committees, to include those from rural, underserved or otherwise diverse backgrounds.

4. In many places, the authors use the term "doctor," which is a generic term which may refer to doctorally-prepared psychologists (PhD or PsyD), nurses (DNP in the U.S.), sociologists, professors of English Literature, etc. Other than when using direct quotes, I would suggest the term "physician" be employed when referring to a medical doctor.
5. There is a body of literature on extended placements in rural (or other underserved) environments, which the authors correctly cite. There is also a body of literature that describes how traits like empathy and idealism decay over the course of medical training. It might be useful to directly consider how longitudinal, extended placements may counteract decays in idealism and empathy...perhaps by removing the student from the effects of a "hidden curriculum?"

I believe every essential and discretionary revision mentioned above can be handled with a scant amount of text and citation. Other than these suggestions, I believe this paper is just about ready to be accepted.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**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.