Reviewer's report

Title: Widening access to medicine may improve GP recruitment in deprived and rural communities.

Version: 2
Date: 9 June 2015

Reviewer: Conor Teljeur

Reviewer's report:

Overall this is a clever study that gives food for thought. It is well-written and addresses an important issue.

Major compulsory revisions:

In the Methods section, the authors should be very clear on the numbers of GPs and practices. One can infer the total number of GPs and practices from the percentages they provide, but they should explicitly state ~4,904 GPs and ~1,012 practices in Scotland, respectively. It would also be valuable to know how many GPs are based in the 80 most deprived practices and 191 rural practices. This information is critical to understanding if the survey respondents constitute a nationally representative sample. Table 1 should have a column added with equivalent figures regarding the total GP workforce (clearly for where it is available (sex, age and current practice location). It is not fair to say there is an inability to compare responders and non-responders (as stated in the Discussion), rather it is limited.

The other issue I have is a potential missed opportunity to test/clarify a point. The paper is concerned with whether GPs practice in areas similar to where they lived at entry to medical school. There is an important distinction as to whether someone practices in a similar area type or the actual area where they grew up. From a policy point of view, the former is easier to deal with as a generic approach can be taken. The latter could be problematic as underserved areas would have to be identified and then medical students would have to be 'recruited' from those areas. The data gathered for the study facilitate a check on this, as you have post code at medical school entry and current post code. A simple measure of distance between the two would be enough to get some sort of handle on this.

Minor revisions:

Page 4, line 94 - by "outwith" I presume you mean "outside" or similar.

Page 6, line 170 - when you refer to the socio-economic status of respondents, I trust you mean at the time of entry to medical school. Please clarify in text.

In Table 2, the percentages (given in brackets) appear to be a percentage of all respondents rather than the subgroup being tabulated. A footnote should be used to clarify what the percentages refer to).
Incidentally, do we know the overlap between remote and deprived practices (in terms of numbers)? It would be helpful to note it (both for all practices and for the survey respondents).

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