Reviewer's report

Title: Lifelong Learning of Chinese Rural Physicians: preliminary psychometrics and influencing factors

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Reviewer: irene betty B kizza

Reviewer's report:

First of all, I commend the authors for the great piece of work done. However, I put forward my observations as I read through with an assumption that, if the comments are taken positively, the findings of the study will be better portrayed.

Question posed by the researchers is well defined.

Minor essential: The methods are appropriate but need more description on the sampling method used. The reader would wish to know how representative the selected 5 regions are for all the regions in the Liaoning Province of China. Need more information on how many rural regions exist in the province and the process of selecting the five regions. If there were some special consideration during selection of the regions, say basing on some characteristics apart from being rural, it should be clearly indicated.

Major compulsory: Ethical issues of confidentiality and autonomy are well addressed. Analysis is well described. However, one would wish to know how the researchers accessed the tool? Is it accessible through public domain or they received permission to use the tool? Where efforts made to pretest the Chinese version of the tool before the survey?

Data are sound and the figures appear to be genuine without evidence of manipulation.

Major Compulsory: Results section

second paragraph: Authors need to re-check the proportion of physicians were satisfied with the career. Is it 60.9% or 61.1%?

Minor Essential: I have a feeling that the authors may choose to re-arrange the results section to better flow to the reader. This can be done basing on the objectives of the study. I perceive that the main aim was to establish the reliability and validity of the instrument. Therefore, results about the tool should follow the section on the demographics of the sample. The second aim was about assessing the physicians' orientation to lifelong learning. Results on orientation to LLL should appear next, and finally, those on factors associated. If the authors agree, then even the numbering of the tables has to be changed.

Major Compulsory: Given that the authors aimed at assessing the orientation of physicians in the rural region towards lifelong learning, I think it would be good for them to make a deduction about the general physician's orientation towards LLL. Specifically, what does a mean score of 45.56 (SD=6.17) mean? Should it
imply low or high level of orientation? That needs to come out clearly for the purposes of conveying the eye catching message in simple way. I also suggest that it would be good if the authors showed the mean scores by the 3 domains. This will not only reveal the LLL domain on which the physicians are best or worst oriented but will also highlight the key areas for focus as the stakeholders in China strategize to promote and enhance life long learning and continuing education for quality primary health care. It will also enable comparison of the orientation of the physician towards LLL in the rural setting of China to that of physicians in the urban setting, as literature shows that there are studies done before among urban physicians.

Manuscript adheres to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition

The discussion and conclusion are well balanced and adequately supported by the data. However, I suggest that authors should make conclusions following all the objectives of the study by adding a statement on the general orientation of the physicians towards LLL. This will capture their aim of assessing the level of orientation.

The limitations are clearly stated. However, the small sample sizes for some of the subgroups may have limited statistical strength of the findings. For example, in Table 6, there were 18 physicians who were very unsatisfied with their career. This is so small a subgroup size. So such limitations may be highlighted in simple words.

8. There is clear evidence for authors' acknowledgement of the previous work done on the subject matter and the gaps, and their work fits well with the existing knowledge.

9. The title and the abstract convey what has been found. However, the authors may wish to consider adding some information in the abstract on the general level of physicians' orientation on LLL and the domain on which the physicians performed best or worst.

10. The writing is acceptable

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest 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