Author's response to reviews

Title: Research Partnerships Between Developing and Developed Countries: Are Global Partnerships Always a Good Thing?

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Point by point reply

Title: Research Partnerships Between Developing and Developed Countries: Are Global Partnerships Always a Good Thing?

Dear Ms Jose

Please find enclosed the point by point replies for the revised manuscript number “MS: 7948462414573674” entitled ‘Research Partnerships Between Developing and Developed Countries: Are Global Partnerships Always a Good Thing?’. It has been revised, taking into account the reviewers’ comments. We acknowledge the reviewers for their interesting suggestions which have improved the paper considerably. The manuscript has been revised carefully and all language and syntactical mistakes have been corrected by a primary English speaker.

Referee 1: Paul Ndebele

Reviewer's report:

Line 178 - Malawi's doctor to population ratio is a result of several factors including the fact that Malawi started training doctors recently.
Answer: Many thanks; we have corrected this statement to reflect the multifaceted contributory factors in this issue.

Line 209 - Please clarify - whether referring to developed or developing country institutions that can be exploited.
Answer: we have amended the manuscript to clarify this point

Referee 2: Solomon (Solly) Benatar

Reviewer's report:

This is a well-written article on an important topic. I am concerned about two deficiencies.
The first is that the authors have fallen into the now common ‘developed world’
pattern of re-labeling what was international research and partnerships as global research and partnerships. This popular trend fails to acknowledge the vital conceptual difference between international health and global health. International health is based on an individualistic, anthropocentric and biomedical conception of health and focuses on providing assistance with health care and research by health personnel or organizations from some (usually wealthy) nations to others across national or regional boundaries. It is an extension of a charitable conception of modern medical care of individuals and associated public health measures with roots in colonial medicine, tropical medicine and philanthropy.

Global Health is conceptually different in that it refers to the health of individuals and populations in the context of a threatened ecological system that affects the life of all. It is a concept that requires acknowledging the social and societal determinants of health/disease, the interconnectedness and interdependence of all life, and the structure of the global political economy that perpetuates wide North South disparities. The pursuit of global health includes but goes beyond international health activities.

The time has come to distinguish clearly between international health and global health to ensure that the broader issues included in an enlightened perspective on global health are not eclipsed.

Answer: Many thanks to the reviewer for this insightful addition. We have amended the manuscript to clarify that we are discussing ‘Global Health’ issues rather than ‘International Health’.

The second problem is that the authors have not done a thorough literature review on the topic of international research and international research ethics.

Many previous publications have drawn attention to most of the issues these authors have succinctly raised and also many other important aspects of such International collaboration, as exemplified by some selected references. Attention to these issues, including changing the world global in many if not all instances throughout the article, and including several additional references could improve the manuscript.
Answer: Many thanks to the reviewer for this comment. We were trying to present an overview and up-to-date summary of the issues in this field, however we accept that a wider presentation of the arguments with specific examples is needed to more clearly explain the extremely complex situation. With this in mind in several places a wider explanation of the points has been added with specific references. We agree this improves the article and thank the reviewer for his perceptive contribution.

Some additional points
Lines 74-78. A note is required that differentiates between what the Nuffield Council Report ‘states’ and what it ‘provides clear argument for’.
Answer: the findings from the Nuffield report have been clarified

Line 80. I am not sure that ‘parameter’ is the correct word to use here
Answer: ‘parameter’ has been amended to ‘standard’

Line 116. Consider reference to reference number 4 below
Answer: the suggested cross-reference has been added

Line 132. Consider changing to ‘populations, where contracting an…
Answer: the suggested amendment has been made

Line 144 Consider including reference to references 2 and 3 below
Answer: This has not been changed but a clarification of the reviewer’s point would be much appreciated. To our mind reference 2 and 3 refer to undergraduate and postgraduate training, and we are not sure how this relates to this paragraph

Line 157 – A brief note about the relevance of Keynesian macroeconomics or a reference to a useful explanatory article would be helpful.
Answer: Many thanks, we have expanded this point with a simple explanation of Keynesian macroeconomics

Line 169. Spell out THET
Answer: this has been amended
Line 228. Surely international peer-reviewed journals should be looking at the quality of the work submitted rather than who wrote it, although the nepotism associated with ‘superior’ journals is hard to overcome!

Answer: we agree that ideally the quality and content of the work is what should be evaluated, and in many cases this does happen – however previous studies have indicated that in some instances, peer-review processes do take into account the origin of the research which can disadvantage less prestigious centers from developing countries. We have clarified this point and referenced studies that indicate these findings.

Line 256. Provide a reference to the AZT work in Zimbabwe

Answer: this has been amended

We are grateful to the reviewers for their important comments and suggestions which have improved the paper considerably. We hope that the reviewers will be satisfied with the changes and the revisions made.

Thank you for considering our paper.

Yours Sincerely,

John Chetwood (on behalf of all authors)