Reviewer’s report

Title: Rural retention of physicians graduated from the collaborative project to increase rural doctors in Thailand: A cohort study

Version: Date: 9 September 2014

Reviewer: Christine Hancock

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Overall this is a strong study with an exceptionally large sample size and an actual outcome of physician retention (not a surrogate measure) which makes a very important contribution to the international literature on rural physician retention. This analysis showed that the CPIRD program increased the retention or “survival” time for a rural physician from a shortened 3.4 years to a nearly average 4.2 years for physicians in any practice setting (average retention time 5 years in several US studies). The study also clearly identifies its limitations and helps continue an ongoing national dialogue on rural retention. The methods appear to be clear and statistically sound. The paper is very succinct and well-written, which makes it easy to read and grasp the main points.

Edits by section: all minor essential revisions unless listed as a question.

Abstract,

1. Methods, third to last line: should read “Statistical data were analysed…” since data is plural

2. Results – First line could be changed to – “Female subjects slightly outnumbered their male counterparts.

Introduction

1. First line: it seems unnecessary to mention the title of this journal in the first line of the introduction. Moreover, the acronym HRH does not seem to be used again later in the manuscript.

2. If space allows, many readers would be interested to know what types of material is covered in the “rural oriented curricula” mentioned on page 6.

3. In the sentence “Little was known…” on page 6, “retentions” should not be plural.

Methods

1. First full sentence, page 7, should read “data were…” Several other places contain in this section contain a singular reference to data and should also be corrected to the plural form.

2. Are there any regulations about the use of Human Subjects or was this study exempt? How were data de-identified so as to maintain anonymity?
3. How are “non-metropolitan districts” defined in this study(by the Thai government? Is this based on population density, town size, or some other measure?

Results
1. The first paragraph regarding the division between urban and rural sites should be included in the methods rather than the results section (except for perhaps the last sentence).

Discussion
1. This section title should not be a plural (should read “Discussion”)
2. The second sentence could be clarified. Does this mean that hometown origin, etc were among the data that were not available for analysis?
3. It would be helpful to place the discussion of limitations at the END of this section and focus on the most important positive findings in the first part of the conclusion.
4. Second paragraph should read “assessed” rather than “accessed”
5. Page 12, second full paragraph – the first sentence of this paragraph is confusing – please clarify.
6. Is there any estimate of how many additional rural physicians the CPIRD has produced over its existence?
7. Is there any sense of why retention times decreased so dramatically over the study period?

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.