Reviewer's report

Title: Women doctors and their careers in European university hospitals: what now in the 21st century?

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Reviewer: Flora De Pablo

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The article by Arrizabalaga et al entitled “Women doctors and their careers in European University Hospitals: what now in the 21st century?” presents very interesting data from one of the largest and most prestigious university hospitals in Spain, the Clinic Hospital in Barcelona.

However, it is very difficult to read due to the unacceptable low quality of the English writing, which requires a complete and thorough editing by a native English speaking person who additionally understands statistics. I consider this a major compulsory revision.

Positive aspects of the study:
1. The large number of cases, 1135 medical doctors, and the significant period of the study (1996-2008).
2. The clear categories of the promotion and hierarchical ranks within the Clinic Hospital.
3. Good statistical analysis and sound results.

Strongly recommended for improvement:
1. The title should be more precise, since this is not a review paper. I suggest “Women doctors and their careers in a large university hospital in Spain at the beginning of the 21st century.”
2. One author affiliation missing (5) should be provided or the number corrected.
3. Only Figure 1 is large enough to be correctly visualized. In Fig. 2 the lettering is too small and the whole figure should be replotted and enlarged. In Fig. 3 the groups of columns for each year should be separated.
4. The Figure legends are mislabeled, the second corresponds to Fig. 3. They should be rewritten, for ex. Fig. 1 legend could say “Ratio between proportions of women and men doctors according to their hierarchical position throughout the period studied.”
5. Abstract: the background should number the first sentence or leave the numbers out.

The results do not need to include statistical significance numbers. The conclusion paragraph is too long, making speculations not supported by the study (…women doctors suggests that they have much to offer…).
6. In Fig 1, Section/Unit Chief position looks like having a trend to rise with time. Is this at the limit of significance? It should be commented in Results.

7. The discussion is too long. The extrapolation to other European hospitals is speculative. They should quote other studies or the Academic She Figures 2012 of the EU for comparison. They probably should leave out the paragraph on salaries, is marginally related to their study. They should alto delete the paragraph on “Limitations of this study” since they are obvious

8. The conclusions three paragraphs are repetitive with discussion. Make a shorter single paragraph, perhaps just leaving the first one, emphasizing the need to review selection criteria.

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

**Quality of written English:** Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

**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