Reviewer's report

Title: Posting and Transfer: key to restoring trust in government health services

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Reviewer: Elsheikh Badr

Reviewer's report:

This is a well articulated piece touching on a vital topic which is rather neglected in the public health and health systems literature. The hypothesis is clearly presented and well argued. I have the following comments for improvement of this potentially publishable manuscript:

Major compulsory revisions

1. Posting and transfer should be structurally linked to retention, and this is not clear or showing in the manuscript. In fact there are some sound posting and transfer measures in some places but the problem is faced with retention/sustainability. So the reader should not be mistaken about the concept of P&T as only putting in place a system for deployment. Stability and retention of health workers in their postings is critical and all important and meaningful for health care delivery. I suggest that the concept/definition of P&T presented in the manuscript be elaborated to emphasize the dimension of sustainability/retention.

2. When the hypothesis tried to suggest the reasons for lack of attention to P&T, it presented some important possible explanations. However, it fails to recognize the strong probability that rather than inadequacy of research methodologies; it is the long-standing neglect of HRH as professional field that really underlies the neglect of P&T among some other important health workforce functions. The momentum on HRH is only recent and evolving and hence the lack of effective coverage of the ingredients of the field.

3. The manuscript does not clearly place P&T within the broader HRH management systems. There is a need to recognize the inter-linkages, whether horizontal or vertical, between P&T and other HRM systems such as scope of practice, job descriptions and job specifications, employee relations, the work environment, etc.

Minor essential revisions

1. There is reference to health professionals and then health workers in the manuscript; I suggest that the paper keep consistent and I prefer the phrase “health workers” given the wide consensus on this in recent authoritative writings.

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 have no conflict of interest