Reviewer’s report

Title: Emerging Roles and Competencies of District and Sub-district Pharmacists: a Case Study from Cape Town

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Reviewer: Nancy Winslade

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Emerging Roles and Competencies of District and Sub-district Pharmacists: a Case Study from Cape Town (Submitted to Human Resources for Health).

This manuscript describes a research methodology fundamentally new to the field of pharmacy practice research and thus represents an excellent opportunity to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of this methodology. As a reader with experience in more traditional methodologies, I found myself searching for specific explanations and details of the research project that were needed to both understand and accept the research methodologies and results presented. As these were lacking in the manuscript, I sought this information elsewhere including in Dr. Bradley’s Ph.D. thesis (http://etd.uwc.ac.za/xmlui/handle/11394/3255). I found this thesis to be an excellent resource that answered most, if not all, of my questions. As I was required to seek this information elsewhere, I recommend that the submitted manuscript be revised and expanded to include more detail from Dr. Bradley’s original work. More specifically, major compulsory revisions include:

1. The background section of the manuscript is difficult to follow and does not provide a complete, strong rationale for the project. As the authors rely heavily on the WHO documents, it would be useful to provide the roles established by WHO as a starting point. Then a more complete literature review, structured in a similar manner as Dr. Bradley’s thesis and including information similar to that found in any of Boxes 2.1, 2.6 and 2.7, would provide a more complete rationale for the project.

2. The background does not provide any information on the model the authors used to relate roles to competencies. On page 10, under Results and Discussion, the authors state that they used a two stage process (“in which we first identified roles and then used these to identify competencies required to fulfill these roles…”), but the authors do not explain how this was accomplished. In contrast, Dr. Bradley’s thesis contains an excellent review of available competency frameworks, including the articles upon which she based her use of competency clusters (Fernandes 2008). Without this information, it is difficult to understand and have confidence in the methodology and results.

3. The methodology is not described in sufficient detail to allow either understanding or replication of the research plan. The process for identifying the roles is unclear, especially the aspect of the author’s role (page 9 “I contributed
information from published literature and document reviews”). Did the author contribute the WHO list of roles or other such literature that would have significantly influenced the participant’s views? Box 1.1 and Figure 3.1 from Dr. Bradley’s thesis provide an excellent overview of the methodology and could be considered for inclusion in the manuscript (with appropriate further explanation of the methodology). In particular, the methodology for thematic analysis and relationship between the analysis of semi-structured interviews or the interactive workshops needs to be clarified.

Minor essential revisions include:

4. There are a number of grammatical errors throughout the manuscript (e.g. page 4 line 5 it should be at ‘the’ primary level, line 17 requires a ‘,’ after roles and functions, line 20 however is the beginning of a new sentence). These need correcting to maximize understanding and minimize detraction while reading.

5. The authors should include discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of both participatory action research and case studies, including resulting limitations to the generalizability of results.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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

**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.