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: John Shaw

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Human Resources for Health

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

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Review

This was a well-written article which addressed the issue of emerging roles and competencies of district and sub-district pharmacists in Cape Town, South Africa. It is presented as a case-study using a participatory action research approach to elicit understanding of these developing roles and how they can be best effected and supported. As an example of an emerging pharmacist role the case-study provided a lot of valuable insights for both the local and wider situations.

Abstract

In the Methods, the author uses the first person “I conducted participatory action research. …”, would this not be better as “The author (HB) conducted…….”? Also in the methods, there is a statement “…provide complimentary PHC services….”: does complimentary in this context mean ‘free’ or ‘subsided’ services or is it meant to be ‘complementary’? It wasn’t really clear to me. These comments also apply to the Methods section.

Background

Although the background was interesting and clearly showed why the study was being conducted, I found it was rather too focused on the local context. I am not familiar with healthcare in general in South Africa, or the particular context in which pharmacy is practised: for example, how many community pharmacies are there in the region and what is their interaction with the new ‘public health’ pharmacists? Likewise I’m not really familiar with the terms ‘district’ and ‘district health teams’. Can I suggest that there is a bit more information provided on some of the wider context of healthcare in South Africa and a little less on some of the specific local aspects. I think this would help readers from other countries.

Methods

These are appropriate and well described and I suggest no changes other than those signalled in the comments on the Abstract.
Results and Discussion
The authors should reflect on whether it would be better to separate the Results and Discussion sections. This is at their discretion but this might improve the ‘flow’ of the paper. If this separation was made, it might facilitate further discussion of the wider implications of their findings. As for the Background section, I think there are some important issues that merit comment in the wider context – emerging roles for pharmacists, support systems, basic and continuing education, interprofessional boundary issues, and so on. While these things are certainly mentioned, this is done primarily in the local context. I understand that this is challenging in a case-study article but it seems to me that many of the specific local issues can be generalised in the context of the Discussion. The results reported are appropriate and the tables are helpful.

Conclusions
These are fine, but could be considered in light of my earlier comments.

General
The title and abstract are fine, and the writing is very good. There are a few minor typos but these will be picked up by editing.

Discretionary Revisions
All of the revisions required are discretionary but I feel the article could be enhanced by framing it in a wider context.

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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'