Reviewer’s report

Title: Factors influencing trainee doctor emigration in a high income country: A mixed methods study

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Reviewer: Christian Brettschneider

Reviewer's report:

The authors of the manuscript „Factors influencing trainee doctor emigration in a high income country: A mixed methods study" give information on an interesting and relevant topic. In total, the manuscript is well written. Research question and objective of the study are clearly stated. The authors chose a mixed methods approach, which is suitable for this kind of topic. The sample appears to be large enough to draw robust conclusions. Potential limitation in terms of the risk of a selection bias was mentioned and appropriately discussed. The approach of data collection analysis is comprehensively described and the analytical approach is appropriate. Main results of the study are presented and the conclusion was derived from and is mainly based on the results. In summary, I have only some small recommendations or advices.

1. Although these results are based on an Irish sample, the results are of interest for other high-income countries as well. I want to ask the authors to give more information on the situation in other high-income countries and to link their results with this evidence. A more international focus would raise the informative value for an international audience.

2. There is an ambiguous in the title of Figure 1. The authors write that Figure 1 presents "Percentage of participant’s in agreement with factors which would influence them to practice medicine abroad". This grammatical style of question reflects a potential ("would"). In supplementary table 1, the authors ask explicitly, why the participants consider leaving. This grammatical style reflects a fact. This might be a small difference but both questions could lead to different answers (Looking first at the title of figure 1, I was not sure if the table presents the results the authors discussed). As the authors asked for facts this should be stated in the title of figure 1.

3. From my point of view, the authors stretch the point in their interpretation of their results. There is clear evidence that the work-life-balance, family reasons, and quality of training influence the decision of leaving. However, there is no clear evidence that career opportunities, earning or work conditions lead to the decision to leave. As presented in Figure 1 these factors are mention by many participants but in both groups, those who want to leave an those who are not sure or do not want to leave. Therefore, the conclusion that these factors are responsible for the wish to leave, is not valid. However, there could be a push-pull mechanism. Factors like quality of training are transitory circumstances and rather
push factors. Nevertheless, in the sample is a high proportion of participants who do not want to return to Ireland after finishing their training. Responsible for this could be better career opportunities, working conditions or earnings. These factors could be labeled as pull- or better stay-factors. Maybe, the authors should incorporate this analysis (logistic model; Return: yes/no as dependent variable) into their study.

4. There are to more factors that deserve a more thorough discussion. Firstly, there is a marginally significant difference between physicians employed by private or public employers. Even if this result is officially not significant, there should be a short discussion. Is there any evidence that illuminates this difference? Secondly, physicians, who are older, married, or have children have a higher motivation to leave. This result is counterintuitive, as younger single should have a higher flexibility. This aspect should be discussed in a more comprehensive manner, as it has a potential effect on political planning and decision-making.

5. In the qualitative results section, the authors are label the participant sometimes as R# or Respondent# or Participant#. This should be standardized.

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