Reviewer’s report

Title: Job preferences of undergraduate nursing students in eastern China: a discrete choice experiment

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Reviewer: Andy Charlwood

Reviewer's report:

This paper looks at the job preferences of nursing students in the Chinese province of Shandong using a discrete choice experiment. Given nursing shortages in China, and the particular problem of rural nurse shortages, this is an important topic. The methodology is well established and appropriate to the problem. Although I am not an expert in these specific methods, the analysis appears to have been conducted appropriately. The careful development and piloting of the survey instrument and the high response rate among sampled nursing students are positive features of the paper.

There are a number of changes that could be made to strengthen the paper further. Some of the language and terminology used is not as clear as it could be. The role of bianzhi is not explained clearly enough. What do bianzhi do that helps nurses in their role? Key concepts need clearer definition. What is 'work strength'? I think it means the physical effort expended, but this is not clear - table 1 suggests it is mainly about shift patterns? What is an excellent working environment and how does an excellent working environment differ from a poor working environment? Descriptions of these key variables would be better in the text rather than in table 1. It would be helpful for an international audience if RMB values could be converted into US dollar values, with the US dollar values included in parentheses.

The background section could be more logically structured. The article makes a good case that there is a nursing shortage in China so we need to know more about nurses job preferences, but the precise nature of the nursing shortage could be better explained. What I took from this section is that there is no shortage of nurses in tertiary hospitals in urban centres, but that there is a shortage in secondary and primary care, with the shortage being more acute in rural areas, but I am not certain I have understood this correctly, so the precise nature of the shortage could be spelt out more carefully, including a more precise quantitative description of the problem.

The discussion could spell out more clearly the similarities and differences with similar studies conducted in other countries. At the moment, this is discussed but in a brief and imprecise way. The logic behind the policy recommendations around the cost effectiveness of different interventions could be more clearly explained, with a clearer line from study results to recommendation.
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