Reviewer’s report

Title: Experiences of Foreign Medical Graduates (FMGs), International Medical Graduates (IMG) and Overseas Trained Graduates (OTG) on entering developing or middle income countries like South Africa: A Scoping Review

Version: 0 Date: 02 Jun 2018

Reviewer: Ivy Bourgeault

Reviewer’s report:

1. Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined?

The research question posed in this paper may not necessarily be new, but the author does offer a new perspective which could be more effectively introduced and emphasized throughout. The commentary and focus on SA is important, as a case example (as both a sending and receiving country). Perhaps it would be best to frame the focus on SA more explicitly as an exemplar from the outset - the author seems to be looking at the literature for what is applicable to SA. One could, however, encourage the paper to be about more than the implications of the findings for SA but for LMIC more broadly, which as the author rightly argues, has been less of a focus in the literature.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replicate the work?

The methods as described are adequate, but some important sections are encouraged. The databases used for the systematic search would be good to include.

I would not use the term 'results' on line 168 because it causes the reader to think this is the findings section. Actually, there is a bit of a mix of content that should be in the methods and some in the results.

In regards to the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the documents it is not clear why the literature on residency match was excluded - unless it is more clearly outline in the title, abstract and elsewhere that the focus in on the implications of the literature for SA and other LMIC without a residency match system. It is unclear whether the literature that included nurses (or others) along with physicians was excluded - not sure that would necessarily be appropriate because that would unnecessarily exclude articles. It is not clear why systematic reviews were excluded.

Details as to the data analysis strategy would aid in the assessment of rigour and replicability - as well as its ability to match the research objectives/questions.
3. Are the data sound and well controlled?

This is difficult to assess without a more fulsome accounting of the details needed of the methods noted above.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?

The presentation of results/findings is quite thin when the content that is more appropriate for the methods section is extracted and moved. Because it is not clear in the methods how the data were analyzed, it is not clear how and what will be reported in the 'results' or findings section.

Some of the details in the discussion would be more appropriate for a results section (e.g., starting from 227 section on Professional and Personal Barriers - which seems to be a key emergent theme from a qualitative analysis of the articles included for analysis - in fact, I would tease apart the professional from personal barriers (there is more on the former than the latter) - and consideration of key factors such as gender and country of origin discussed). In some of the barriers/challenged presented, such as the underutilization of the skills of the IMGs, this is something all doctors (and nurses) report - see recent OECD report 2016 on skill mix and utilization.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?

The discussion and conclusions are not quite what was expected. As noted above, the discussion had material more appropriate for a results section. In the discussion, this would have been a good place to bring the key findings of usefulness to a SA and LMIC context (with clarity that this is the focus in the introduction, abstract and title). The discussion needs to make clear how this analysis advances our knowledge beyond other reviews.

6. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?

Yes, the title and abstract are accurate. Given the specific concern with LMIC and SA in particular, perhaps this could be included in the title and abstract.

7. Is the writing acceptable?

Yes, the writing is by and large clear and concise.

I would suggest using one term, IMGs, but accounting for a search that includes the other terms. If the author disagrees, it would be good to justify the use of the term FMGs.

Major Compulsory Revisions
The methods section requires a description of the analysis undertaken as described above.

Related to this, a more thorough presentation of findings seems in order - moving content from the discussion. As a result, the discussion would need to be expanded to make clear what the specific implications are of what was found and how the analysis constitutes an advance of the literature.

There are a number of important sources that have not been included in the literature review, perhaps they were considered:


The author may wish to consider the following published in 2017 (the first especially in light of the focus on Canadians studying abroad - which was an issue raised of SA citizens studying abroad):


Minor Essential Revisions

* Sentence on line 40-42 in the abstract needs to be rewritten.

* It would be very helpful for the manuscript to have page numbers

Level of interest
Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English
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