Reviewer’s report

Title: How do we strengthen the health workforce in a rapidly developing high-income country? A case study of Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates

Version: 1 Date: 01 Dec 2018

Reviewer: Andrea Nove

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for considering my earlier comments. The paper is certainly improved, but I don't feel that the following comments have been adequately addressed:

1. "I would also like to see the discussion and conclusions section making a much clearer link between what the study found and what the Abu Dhabi health system should be doing better or differently in relation to HRH."

The authors responded that they had reorganized the discussion to make it clearer. I see little evidence of reorganization, and am still left with the question 'so what?'

2. "I would like to see a short discussion about how Abu Dhabi may be similar or different to the other emirates with respect to health workforce and health outcomes, to help the reader gauge the extent to which the conclusions of this study may be generalised to the rest of the UAE and/or other contexts."

There is now a new section about context, which is helpful. However, it does not address a key comment from both reviewers, i.e. that the reader needs to understand the context as it relates to the health system and specifically HRH.

3. "Figure 1: It's not clear how you have defined over- and under-supply. What is the denominator for the percentages? At present the paper does not present compelling evidence of over- or under-supply. The reader is just being asked to take your word for it."

The authors have referred to the source of the data, but not answered the question 'what is the denominator for the percentages?' This could be done by labelling the y-axis of Figure 1 properly. 'Percentages' is not an adequate axis label.
4. "Explain why having a higher % of expatriates is a problem for the health system, and quote evidence. Is it because of language barriers, cultural barriers, lack of acceptability, high turnover rates, poor quality, or what?"

An explanation has been added, but no evidence quoted to support it. If this is speculation, it should be clearly identified as such.

5. "Table 1: Why are there NAs in the first column?"

I am aware that NA stands for 'not applicable'. My point is that the data is applicable. It's just missing. This should be made clear to the reader.

6. "Provide a reference for the statement that chronic disease prevalence is projected to increase."

The reference provided is another paper by the same authors that makes the same unsubstantiated claim. This is insufficient.

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