Reviewer’s report

Title: Tracking the Leavers: Towards a better understanding of doctor migration from Ireland to Australia 2008-18

Version: 0 Date: 12 Feb 2019

Reviewer: Dean Carson

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Very minor comments -

* Page 4 line 60 - not "currently vacant", but vacant at what point in time?

* Page 5 line 1-3 - the comment on pay is not needed here as it is repeated (and expanded) below

* Note that the Census data also include the year of arrival in Australia, which would have been useful in narrowing the population drawn from that data source

This is a well written and very important paper, covering a topic which is largely overlooked in the medical workforce migration literature - migration between 'high income' countries. The data are treated well (with the exception of the comment on Census data above) and are generally well interpreted.

My only concern is the lack of migration theory explicitly referenced in the paper. The discussion/ conclusion broadly refers to push and pull factors, and there is a large literature on the push-pull theory of migration (starting, of course, with Lee in 1966). However, there are other factors at play here which might enrich the interpretation of the data. One is the idea of chain migration (which again has a long history dating back at least to the MacDonalds in 1964) - which would also offer an explanation for why migration continues (and even increases) after the 'shock' has ended. There is also a broad literature on the impact of 'shocks' (economic and environmental mostly) on migration patterns. Importantly, there are theories around Irish emigration specifically which you touch on but do not offer as much in the way of explanatory to the patterns you have observed (apart from some relation to Australia as a choice of country).

Obviously there is no need or scope to include all theories of migration, but I would like to see a bit more concrete consideration of how at least some of these theories might help the interpretation of the data here. This might also help answer the question "why might the Irish experience be similar or different to that of other counties which experienced a GFC 'shock'?".

Which is a rambling way of requesting 2 minor changes - inclusion of some theoretical considerations, and a sentence or two responding to that last question. Otherwise, I hope this
paper can serve as a foundation for an increased attention on health professional migration between 'high income' countries.

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