Reviewer’s report

Title: Nurses and Midwives demographic shift in Ghana – The policy implications of a looming crisis

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Reviewer: Marcia Kirwan

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This is an interesting article with both local and universal relevance. I think the points made about younger, inexperienced nurses working beyond their own experience in both managerial and clinical roles are very valid, with consequences for patient care. However I think it is important to make note that such work has consequences for nurses also and therefore for the profession. Such conditions are likely to lead to stress and burnout amongst nurses themselves in the short term, but may have implications for recruitment and retention also, as well as how the profession is viewed.

Additionally no reference is made in the article about the type of education nurses in Ghana experience. What level is this training at? Is it different since these government initiatives? International research suggests that the type of education nurses receive impacts quality of patient care. Higher education levels (such as degree level education) have been shown to be linked to higher quality patient care, and may in fact be more important in determining patient care quality than experience levels. It might be prudent to include some reference to the international literature on these points.

Investment in the nursing workforce by governments must be welcomed. While there may be a fear that demographic changes might result in a reduction in quality of care to patients, is there any real evidence of this? While the stats show a youth bulge, is the real message here that there are more nurses in Ghana, therefore the public is better served overall? I think this point may be lost in the arguments made by the authors. Any potential adverse impact will be short term as nurses gain experience quickly in clinical practice.

However the suggestions for enhanced mentorship and study leave policies are not unreasonable and can certainly help alleviate any potential problems for patient care or nurse wellbeing.

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