Author’s response to reviews

Title: "Medical tourism will…obligate physicians to elevate their level so that they can compete": A qualitative exploration of the anticipated impacts of inbound medical tourism on health human resources in Guatemala

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Author’s response to reviews:

Dear Editor,

We thank you for your continued consideration of this article and for the opportunity to respond to the reviewer comments. Reviewer #3 delivered an entirely positive and supportive review and thus we have no response to offer. With regard to the assessment provided by Reviewer #2, we offer our response to their comments below. However, we have made no changes to the article. This is because reviewer 2 is making suggestions regarding changes to the methodology that are not in keeping with the goals and objectives of the current analysis and overall study design. In the methods section we clearly state that the study uses a case study methodology, that we used NVivo software to support analysis, and that we use a thematic approach to data analysis. The textual analysis (and grounded theory approach?) suggested by this reviewer is entirely different from what we have done and would require a completely different study design. We respect the comment and appreciate the opportunity to respond, however. Our intent here is not to be dismissive, and if you believe we have misinterpreted any of the points raised by this reviewer please do let us know. Our responses to Reviewer #2 are marked by * below.

With regards,

Valorie (on behalf of my co-authors)
Reviewer #2: Article of interest in the MT field, due to the expansion characteristics of the activity in the Latin American Caribbean. The literature review shows opportunities to contextualize the prevailing situation in Guatemala. On the other hand, it is necessary to take into account the form of approach to the phenomenon, although it is mentioned that qualitative was chosen, at least 50 interviewees are indicated. In this sense, the technique used is not well defined. That is, it is recommended to properly describe how the data collected was treated to achieve a relevant analysis.

* We have carefully reviewed the methods section and are unable to identify missing details. The methods section currently meets all qualitative study reporting guidelines and provides very specific information with regard to data collection and analysis.

In this sense, the use of Atlas.Ti or similar software allows a semantic approximation.

* It is our understanding that Atlas.Ti software is most appropriate for use in the context of qualitative research that employs the grounded theory methodology. The current study does not use grounded theory. This study uses case study methodology and frames the findings in the context of relevant health system details identified through our media review and conversations about the country's medical tourism sector. This approach is consistent with analysis in case study where specific findings are contrasted against other known information and where contextual information is sought (e.g., from media reports) to frame findings and identify directions for data collection.

So that a semantic network, would allow an analysis of the results, through the relevant words product of the interviews.

Therefore, the manuscript fails to link reality with the discursive elements of equity and the medical services present in Guatemala.

* We agree that there are opportunities to explore this topic through other methodological and analytic approaches. Our goal was not to pursue a network analysis, nor was it to focus on the language used by participants. A significant limitation of the latter is our reliance on data that has been translated and thus an analysis focused on language becomes problematic in that the meaning of some words may be (literally) lost in translation. We disagree that the analysis does not frame the findings in the context of equity and medical care in Guatemala as this is the entire focus of the discussion. Nor is there any evidence in the methodological literature that would suggest that a network or semiotic analysis (or grounded theory methodology) would achieve results that are more deeply illustrative of inequities in Guatemala than the current one.