Reviewer's report

Title: The impacts of training pathways and experiences during intern year on doctor emigration from Ireland

Version: 0 Date: 21 Jun 2019

Reviewer: Niamh Humphries

Reviewer's report:

The impact of training pathways and early career experience on doctor emigration

This is an interesting article, but the discussion and conclusion need a little more work prior to publication.

Title
I'm not sure that the title of the paper reflects its content, specifically in relation to training pathways. Suggest that the article title is modified to focus on the impact of the intern year on intent to emigrate.

Abstract
In the methods section specify that survey was administered to a cohort of recently qualified doctors at the end of their intern year.
Specify whether those surveyed were from all/some Irish medical schools (as mentioned on p6).

Background
P4 please explain why Ireland has a high number of medical graduates per 100,000 but a relatively low number of practicing doctors per 100,000.
Foreign trained (p4) or non-EU (abstract). Use same terminology throughout and define.
P5 'The concern is that while this has been the practice for many years in Ireland (19), in the recent decade there is growing evidence to show that while many doctors migrate with the intention of returning to their homeland, a high proportion never return (26)'. Rephrase this sentence as it is unclear.
P5 'Similarly, a 2014 survey of 307 Irish-trained doctors who had emigrated 1-5 years previously, reported that those planning to remain abroad had increased from 10% at the time of leaving Ireland to 34% at the point of the survey. Furthermore, with the passage of time, those intending to return to Ireland had fallen from 50% to 25% (26)' Rephrase this sentence as it is unclear.
As the survey was conducted at the end of intern year, suggest that the authors explain the intern year and its place in the medical career pathway.

Methods
P6: why the baseline sweep of all final year medical students? Are the results of this survey published? If so, please reference.
P6: suggest replace young doctor with early career doctor, or intern.
P8: include that the survey was sent to final year medical students in all 6 Irish medical schools (as mentioned on p6).
Within fig 1: All final year medical students in 2016; explain what is meant by 'outside EU students'; explain what is meant by 'baseline responders' and give year of this survey; add year (2018?) to the intern responder box.

Results

P10: It would be interesting to see what proportion of respondents graduated from medical school with no debt. It would also be interesting to see debt levels by whether responders were DEM or GEM students during medical school.
P11 please define 'experiencing callousness toward people'.

Discussion

P14: this study of interns (rather than young doctors).
P15: raises a really interesting point, i.e. that 64% of respondent interns want to emigrate following their (mandatory) intern year! I think the implications of a negative experience of the intern year for the health system/medical training/medical profession should be discussed further.
P15: 'These findings are of great concern, particularly in light of the ongoing implementation of recommendations that were introduced in 2015 to address unsatisfactory training and working conditions (see (39,40))'. Sentence unclear, please rephrase.

Some of your most interesting findings are not discussed in the discussion/conclusion. I'd recommend you discuss some/all of the following findings in the discussion section:
o Debt levels on graduation, including the size of the debt accrued by GEM/DEM graduates and the implications for intent to migrate.
o That 64% of respondent interns intend to go abroad to practice medicine
o That 70% of respondents had a negative experience of staffing levels and 69% had a negative experience of protected training time, during their intern year.
o Respondent perceptions of work life balance abroad vs in Ireland.

Conclusion

P16: I think that the conclusion should focus more on why such a high % of respondent interns (GEM and DEM) intend to emigrate and the implications for the Irish health system.
And on respondents' experience of the (mandatory) intern year (staffing levels, training time, service demands, perceptions of training in Ireland vs abroad).
My take home from the findings presented in the paper is that the intern year should be improved in order to encourage retention/discourage intent to emigrate.
Level of interest
Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

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6. yes, I previously worked with this research group and have previously co-authored papers with some of the authors of this paper. I no longer work with this research group and was not involved in this paper.

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