Author’s response to reviews

Title: Job satisfaction of public and private primary care physicians in Malaysia: analysis of findings from QUALICO-PC

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Version: 1 Date: 19 Jun 2019

Author’s response to reviews:

Thank you for your comments and suggestions which enable us to improve the quality of our manuscript.

Response to reviewer #1
1. Is it possible to explain the term ‘geographic maldistribution’ for those readers who are not familiar?
   - We have revised introduction section and sentence were rephrased. The term ‘geographic maldistribution’ is no longer included in current version.

2. I wondered whether there is any previous literature specific to the challenges facing primary care physicians in particular in Malaysia? If so, please can you include and if not, please state that this is the case.
   - To our knowledge, there is no literature that discuss about challenges facing primary care physicians in Malaysia. For this reason, we think that our study can contribute to this as it reflects perception of primary care physicians on their current working condition. We have also added this in Introduction section (page 6, line 133).

3. Is it possible to provide a brief summary of each of the questionnaire measures i.e. what they intend to measure, reliability & validity of the measures? Also, can the questionnaires be accessed by the reader either as an appendix or by providing a reference where you could access them? It looks like this could be in reference 24 but be helpful to clarify.
   - We have now included the questionnaire as a supplementary material.
We did not elaborate about the questionnaire development because it has been described in details elsewhere (reference 34). The questionnaire was developed by compiling validated questionnaires and piloting it in three countries. To ensure that the questionnaires captured the desired constructs, the adaptations were done as such that the questionnaires remained as close as possible to the original to enable benchmarking. For content validity, the English version of the questionnaire was reviewed by a committee consisting of two Family Medicine Specialists and three researchers. All doctors were given the English version of the practice and doctor questionnaires under the assumption that all doctors could read and converse in fluent English. Some of these details have also been included in the main text (page 6, line 139 – 152).

4. Could information be given about response rates? E.g. how many clinics/doctors were invited to participate and how many responded? Regarding the sample size, how many primary care physicians are there in Malaysia? What % of them participated in the study? - We followed the QUALICOPC method in which a minimum sample of 220 clinics are required for the country. Using stratified random sampling, final number of respondents are 221 doctors from public clinics and 239 doctors from private clinics. This information has also been added in (refer page 6, line 145).

There are approximately 3132 doctors in public primary care clinics but there is no data on the number of doctors in private clinics. A total of 239 public doctors participated in this study, accounting for 7.6%.

5. Line 212 p.9 “After adjustment for other factors”. It would be helpful if could specify which factors you adjusted for in the analysis - We have made the changes and the sentence now reads
“After adjustment for other factors, namely age, gender, practice location, type of practice, patient load, working hours, on-call duties, and involvement in other professional activities outside primary care practice, ...........”. (refer page 10, line 239).

6. The authors rightly point out in the limitations that the study is cross-sectional and the limited measure of job satisfaction. As the measure used only contained a few items, perhaps the authors could comment on this and make recommendations for future research on which measure would provide a more holistic assessment. - This has been discussed in page 14, line 335-346.

7. When the information about sample size and response rates has been added, perhaps the authors would like to comment on whether this is either a strength or limitations of the study. - This has now been added in, refer page 14, line 336.

Response to reviewer #2
1. The introduction states that the low density of primary care providers is a public health problem in Malaysia, and the subsequent section discusses workforce attrition due to job satisfaction. Is the high attrition rate the main reason for the lack of primary care providers in Malaysia? What causes the job dissatisfaction? It would be good to provide some underlying causes of the low density of primary care providers, drawing on existing studies, and linking the argument to the study of health worker job satisfaction. - We have revised the introduction according to your comment.

2. One of the study objectives is to compare job satisfaction for medical doctors in public and private primary care clinics. It would be good to clarify which sector the study focuses on and how the comparison of public and private can produce policy implications. - In this study, we assessed job satisfaction of doctors in both public and private sectors. We added further information on this in introduction (refer page 4, line 96).
3. It would be helpful to include an explanation of how the standard international data collection instruments were adapted to the study setting. If the study team undertook pilot testing of the questionnaire, a brief explanation of the process involved in the pilot testing would be of benefit. - Refer page 6, line 149

4. A brief explanation on the basis for selecting the independent variables should be included – are there any existing studies that can be referenced to show factors underlying doctor job satisfaction in the study setting? - This information is now available in page 8, line 179.

5. The section states that job satisfaction in Malaysia is higher than that in European countries despite the fact that the workload in Malaysia is greater. It would be interesting to see possible reasons for the findings, drawing on the existing literature. - We have revised the discussion section to address this comment, please refer to page 12, line 278-289.

6. As mentioned above, it would be of benefit to provide a paragraph discussing the data collection instruments, considering both the advantages and limitations of the instruments, and providing suggestions for use of the same/similar questionnaires to measure health worker job satisfaction in other settings. - This information is now available in page 14, line 335-346.