Reviewer’s report

Title: Reforming Medical Education Admission & Training in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: Who Gets Admitted and Why it Matters

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Reviewer: Tim Martineau

Reviewer's report:

General

This review is on an important topic regarding the performance of health workers and provides some useful recommendations.

However, in its current state there is a lack or clarity in the following areas:

a. The nature of the problem: performance - absenteeism, receiving informal payments, abusive behaviour; attraction and retention - especially to work in rural areas; or both?

b. Low-income countries or low and middle-income counties: direct or indirect references are all to middle income countries (Iraq, Nigeria, Philippines, Cuba and India) - see https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519?

c. Clinicians or health workers in general?

Next, though clarity on a - c is first needed, there is insufficient identification of the root causes. A major emphasis is put on 'professional identity' without this being explained or how it leads to the specific problems identified. More attention to root causes is needed, though without going into too much detail, given that this is a commentary.

This then means, without proper analysis of the causes, that the argument of linking improvements in admission procedures to better workforce performance is not strong. This should be reviewed.

Additional points:

* The recommended number of references (10) has been exceeded

* The problems identified occur in HIC and MLIC countries. Perhaps the argument about maximising the effectiveness of the workforce can be made - relevant to all contexts - but that this is particularly important in LMICs where disease burden is highest and
workforce shortages greatest. As currently expressed, authors may be open to criticism for lack of justification for selection of this category of country.

* Before proposing to foster intrinsic motivation during training, some discussion of whether this had existed before (in my experience in many LMICs it had) and if so, why has this been eroded. Again, it's necessary to address the causes.

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