Author’s response to reviews

Title: Migration Intentions of Asian and African Medical Students Educated in China: A Cross Sectional Study

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Author’s response to reviews:

Reviewer #1:
Institution: do the authors work at a medical school that trains international medical students? Should this be mentioned as a competing interest? Should this be mentioned in the methods section, as it might help to explain the high response rate (89%) to the survey.
Response:
Thank you for the questions.
We have added the following part in the “Data collection and data analysis” in Methods section in our revised manuscript (P6L25): “The person who distributed the questionnaire was involved in the teaching affairs management of the IMSs at the university, and thus was familiar with the IMSs, which might contribute to the high response rate in this study.”

Do you have any information about whether IMS in China are funded by their home governments to undertake medical education in China and whether that influences their plans to return home/migrate onwards?
Response:
Thank you for the question.
According to the information provided by the IMSs in our university, the majority of their home countries do not provide such funding. Only few countries provide such funding but with very limited slots. For example, one student from Nepal mentioned that Nepal’s government provides fund for Nepalese students to study medicine in China, but only around 10-15 seats in the whole Nepal, and the fund recipients are expected to come back to Nepal to work for 2 years after the completion of study. Since only few students can have the opportunity to get such funding, the influence of such funding is very little.
Besides, none of the participants in our study were funded by their home governments, so this factor did not affect the IMSs’ migration intentions in our study.

The article (particularly the background and discussion sections) would benefit from a thorough proof-
read in English prior to re submission, as some of the phrases used are awkwardly written. Here are some examples from p1-5:

Response:
Thank you so much for pointing out the awkwardly written phrases for us, and helping us to improve the language in our article. We are truly grateful for your valuable suggestions. We really learned a lot from your comments.

We have asked a native English speaker, Machuki Jeremiah Ong’achwa, to help us check the English expressions and help us revise the manuscript linguistically. And we thanked him for his kindly help in our Acknowledge section (P15L6).

P1L8: should it read the 'onward migration intentions' of China educated international medical students?
Response:
Sorry for not expressing it clearly.
The title means “migration intentions of Asian and African medical students educated in china”, and we have added the word “intentions” into our title, which is now “Migration Intentions of Asian and African Medical Students Educated in China: A Cross Sectional Study”.

P2L 35: 'A total of 142 students chose to stay outside their home countries temporarily or permanently'. Does this mean that they intended to remain outside their home country once their medical training had been completed?
Response:
Sorry about the confusion in the sentence.
We have changed the sentence into “A total of 142 students expressed that immediately or some time later after their medical study in China, they would stay outside their home countries temporarily or permanently.” in our revised manuscript (P2L15).

P2: 'the HIC going intentions' awkwardly written. Do you mean onward migration to a HIC?
Response:
Sorry about the confusion in the sentence.
We have revised this sentence as “Among them, 88 (61.97%) showed interest for a HIC, who were predominantly female and with higher academic rank.” in our revised manuscript (P2L17).

P2: 'learning medicine' = studying medicine?
Response:
Yes. By “learning medicine”, we mean studying medicine.
We have changed the expression “learning medicine” into “studying medicine” in our revised manuscript (P4L8, P4L9).

P2: Where is Comoros?
Response:
Comoros, officially Union of the Comoros, is an island country in the Indian Ocean located at the northern end of the Mozambique Channel off the eastern coast of Africa.
To avoid any confusion, we have changed the country’s name into “Union of the Comoros” in our
revised manuscript (P4L14, P8L15).

P3: 'and to acquire a work visa if they intend to work in China' post-graduation.  
Response:  
Thank you for the suggestion. We have changed the sentence into “and to apply for a work visa if they intend to work in China after graduation” (P5L2).

P5: about the surveys by Tianjin Medical University and Guangxi Medical University. I'm presuming they surveyed IMS alumni, but how long after completion of their studies did these surveys take place?  
Response:  
Yes. Both of the two universities surveyed their IMS alumni. Tianjin Medical University did their survey in 2009, collecting the information of their IMS alumni who graduated in the years between 2002 and 2008, translating to a range of 1-7 years after graduation. Guangxi Medical University did their survey in 2011, collecting the information of their IMS alumni graduated in the years between 2000 and 2010, translating to a range of 1-11 years after graduation.  
We have replaced the expression “international graduates” with “IMS alumni” in the relevant part of the revised manuscript (P5L8).

P8L54: 'Overall, 124 (46.62%) students were determined to return home' should this read intended?  
Response:  
Sorry about the confusion in the sentence.  
We have revised this sentence as “Overall, 124 (46.62%) students intended to return home” in our revised manuscript (P8L25).

P10L29: 'were determined' or intended?  
Response:  
Sorry about the confusion. We have changed the expression “were determined” into “intended” in our revised manuscript (P10L15).

P10L44: 'As Akl et al. [19] stated, it was important to assess the migration attitudes of medical students graduating from foreign medical schools to facilitate healthcare policy development' Please explain/expand.  
Response:  
Thank you so much for your good suggestion.  
We have revised the sentence as “Abroad-educated medical students constitute a potential medical workforce resource for the countries they will reside in after graduation. Therefore, their migration intentions serve as a very useful reference for both their home countries and their intended countries to develop healthcare workforce policies [19] (P10L21).

P11L10: Rephrase/explain this sentence more 'Currently, the percentage of healthcare workforce from LMICs migrating abroad has reached alarming levels globally, posing detrimental effects to the already struggling healthcare systems in LMICs [24,26], despite efforts by governments to discourage medical brain drain'.
Response:

Thank you for the good suggestion. We have rephrased the sentence in our revised manuscript as the following (P11L9):

“Despite the serious shortage of medical workforce, the continuous exodus of health workers from LMICs due to factors such as attractive payment, supportive work conditions and career development opportunities, exacerbated the issue of physician undersupply in these countries, further decreasing the healthcare delivery and health outcomes in LMICs [24,26].”

P11L24: Rephrase this sentence 'although China received the highest number of votes as the preferred temporary destination outside the home country, the number of students who chose it as a permanent destination was much lower'.
Response:

Thank you for the good suggestion. We have rephrased the sentence in our revised manuscript as the following (P11L16):

“although nearly 20% of the IMSs chose China as the short-term destination, less than 5% chose it as a place for permanent stay.”

P12L5: Rephrase 'possibly due to their confined geographic mobility'
Response:

We have rephrased the sentence “possibly due to their confined geographic mobility and responsibility to take care of their families” into “possibly due to factors related to social and familial considerations” in our revised manuscript (P12L8).

Reviewer #2: Your article needs to be published, but it will raise a great many more questions than answers it can provide at this stage.

There are many ethical issues that are sidelined in the environment of your work, but not by you, per se, but more so by the higher authorities in the medical qualifications landscape. You are following a scholarly route when pursuing this line of work, but I guess that what it ultimately represents may be a problem to some international readers.

The issue of it being so challenging to gain working visas in the same country as where training is offered - this is a serious problem that will need redress at an international level.

In addition please pay particular attention to a full copy edit of the paper to ensure that its English language use is improved.

Response:

Thank you so much for your interest in our work and your approval of our article. We are truly grateful for your valuable suggestions.

We have asked a native English speaker, Machuki Jeremiah Ong’achwa, to help us check the English expressions and help us revise the manuscript linguistically. And we thanked him for his kindly help in our Acknowledge section.

We hope our work could provide some useful information for healthcare planning and policy development for both students’ home countries and their intended countries.