Reviewer's report

Title: Hypothesis: Improving literacy about health workforce will improve rural health workforce recruitment, retention, and capability

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Reviewer: Lucio Naccarella

Reviewer's report:

Overall the manuscript topic (health workforce literacy in rural health) is of merit - however, multiple conceptual issues require addressing for this manuscript to make a contribution. Specifically, the framing of the manuscript as as 'Hypothesis' and the claim that 'health workforce literacy' is a new concept is misleading and de-contextualised.

Firstly, the phrase 'Hypothesis' - while intriguing - is misleading - possibly 'assumptions' may be more accurate - as hypothesis gives the topic a strange quantitative feel - in a topic (health literacy) that is very complex, dynamic and has systems properties. Furthermore, no attempt is made to articulate counter - hypotheses. We advise further reflections by authors on this phrasing.

Secondly, with regard to authorship - more detailed information is required on the 12 authors - as it is very unclear what their contributions are, what lens/perspectives they have - that have informed hypotheses?

Thirdly, the manuscript appears de-contextualised - with minimal acknowledgement and recognition that while within rural health - the concept of health workforce literacy may not be a central discussion point - more broadly health workforce literacy is and has been widely debated and discussed. The authors need to reflect upon all the work that has occurred within 'Health Workforce Planning' - where the health workforce recruitment, retention and capability - have been written about from a health systems literacy lens. Furthermore, entire Journal Issues have been devoted to Health Workforce literacy eg Aust Health Review from an allied Health lens. Within the mental health arena- Mental health workforce literacy has been discussed. Within the Health Care Coordination arena- health workforce literacy has been discussed. It is important to further point out that the authors appear to briefly recognise the importance of Organisational Health Literacy frameworks and approaches that also include a focus on the 'Health workforce'. With regard to health workforce literacy capability the authors are advised to reflect upon health workforce preparation and ongoing professional development.

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Quality of written English
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Acceptable

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