Reviewer’s report

Title: A scoping review on Family Medicine in sub-Saharan Africa: Definition, practice and positioning in African health care systems

Version: 0 Date: 02 Sep 2019

Reviewer: Klaus von Pressentin

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this manuscript.

1. Does this paper fit within the areas of focus of the journal?

This is an important contribution, as it summarises the current status of family medicine in Sub-Saharan Africa well. It is vital for policy makers to understand the role of family physicians in strengthening PHC teams, especially as SSA and WHO leaders have made a renewed commitment towards high-quality PHC and UHC.

2. Are the paper's introduction & objectives clear?

The authors provided a concise introduction to the social and scientific value of the study, and provided a focused research question to guide the review (linked to the sub-questions in textbox 2).

3. Is the paper is well written (no typographical, syntax or grammatical errors)?

The paper is well written and reads clearly.

There are a few minor corrections to be made:

a. Table 4, line 3: Change "Akoojee Yusufand and Mash" to "Akoojee and Mash"

b. Table 4, line 51: Change "Pressentin" to "Von Pressentin"; change "Family Practice" to "BMC Family Practice" (this change in journal title will also affect the numbers in Figure 1).

c. Textbox 1: definition of GPs: change "in South Africa are seen as doctors working in PHC without further specialization" to "in South Africa are seen as primary care doctors working in the private sector without further specialization"
4. Are the content / conclusions / recommendations correct (evidence-based) and clearly communicated?

The authors may wish to consider whether they should rather use the term "scoping review" to describe their method, instead of using the term "systematic scoping review". Whilst the latter has been described (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26134548), using "scoping review" as opposed to "systematic review" would be better suited to the research question in this study (https://bmcmedresmethodol.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12874-018-0611-x).

The authors did mention a few key limitations, most notably the absence of the PRISMA flow diagram. The EQUATOR reporting guidelines for scoping reviews bear relevance, which the authors may wish to review (http://www.equator-network.org/reporting-guidelines/prisma-scr/). The focus on English publications only, as well as published peer-reviewed articles only are significant limitations. It is interesting to note that the authors included the limitations in the methods section; one wonders whether an additional reflection on these significant limitations in the discussion section will not assist the reader with appreciating the limited selection of papers for this scoping review? The development of family medicine in francophone African countries tells a potentially different story compared to their English counterparts. This deserves recognition and has been the focus of the recent Primafamed meeting in Kampala in June 2019.

In summary, this is a valuable contribution and a sound effort at summarising the peer-reviewed, English-communicated overview of the contribution of family medicine to SSA health systems. The various stages of development of the discipline across the region needs to be considered by policy makers and researchers alike, when planning and deploying HRH in PHC systems.

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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