Reviewer's report

Title: Specialisation versus special interest - the Australian podiatry experience

Version: 1 Date: 11 May 2015

Reviewer: Lisa Farndon

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review your paper. This is an interesting and pertinent subject for the podiatry profession but I am not sure whether the conclusions that have been made are substantiated by the results. The paper would benefit from some clearer explanations of the results including the different tasks or competencies found in different areas of perceived specialist roles. Also to set the context it would be beneficial to discuss what are the current specialist areas of podiatry and how these can be defined (e.g. a post graduate training route, the ability to demonstrate certain competencies that can identify a specialist as opposed to a generalist).

Minor Essential Revisions

Abstract Results. I suggest using the term 'podopaediatrics' or putting this in addition rather than just 'paediatrics' to represent the name of the specialty in the UK for those readers.

Abstract Conclusions. There is a statement about podiatric surgery and prescribing but it is not clear whether this has taken place yet in Australia, please clarify.

Page 3, first paragraph. It may be pertinent to mention the similarities of protecting the title rather than the scope of practice in UK podiatry too.

Page 3, 4th paragraph, last sentence regarding GP fundholding may need some more explanation.

Page 4, 3rd paragraph, last two sentences about scope of practice would benefit from some further explanation.

Page 6, 4th paragraph typo 'theses' subsets.

Major Compulsory Revisions

Page 5, Methods. Please include a copy of the survey. Third paragraph. More justification is required to support why a 'generalist' with one or two special interests is the same as a 'specialist' and again if more than 3 special interests were declared that this is a 'generalist' role.

Page 5, last paragraph, There is no explanation and justification for use of the Chi square tests. The statement about combining generalists with a special interest with specialist to increase statistical power suggests that a power calculation was not done prior to the survey being sent out to determine the responses needed to carry out these tests and show any statistical significance.
These need further justification and clarification.

Page 6, 4th paragraph. There is a statement about an analysis being performed in the biomechanics special interest group but more details are needed to explain this.

Page 6, last two paragraphs make statements about roles of a specialist in biomechanics and diabetes which I'm not sure can be justified from the these figures.

Page 7, first paragraph. This needs re-wording and there is no explanation of what the statistical tests show (e.g. statistical significance or not).

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.