

## Author's response to reviews

**Title:** International Medical Graduates in Family Medicine: An Examination of Professional Characteristics and Attitudes

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Orville Adams, Editor-in-Chief

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Dr. Adams:

Thank you for your evaluation of my manuscript, "International Medical Graduates in Family Medicine: Results from the Community Tracking Study Physician Survey," manuscript ID: 9985568687914977. The comments of the reviewers were insightful.

My coauthors and I have revised the manuscript and are resubmitting a revised paper, "International Medical Graduates in Family Medicine in the US: An Exploration of Professional Characteristics and Attitudes," for your review. We have incorporated many of the suggestions made by the reviewers and provide responses to all concerns in this letter.

Reviewer Stephen S. Mick, PhD, CHE; Comment 1: Dr. Mick has described that our data set does not allow us to perform the sophisticated analysis necessary to truly address the exact practice locations of the IMG family physicians in our study with regards to the underserved. On page 7, paragraph 2, we address this concern. The studies offered by Dr. Mick are indeed more refined analyses of where in both urban and rural settings IMG physicians of all specialties are practicing. There are few studies that focus on IMG family physicians in particular. Given the large amount of family physicians that serve the underserved populations of this country, we feel this finding is an important one to discuss and is an issue that deserves further research.

Comment 2: See response to Comment 1.

Comment 3: Dr. Mick raises the important issue regarding the age of the data used in the analysis. Throughout the manuscript, we have justified our use of data from 1996-1997. Although the CTS has performed physician surveys in subsequent years, the 1996-1997 data set was specifically chosen for several reasons. First, it is the largest nationally representative survey which oversampled primary care, providing us a large sample size. Also, the 1996-1997 CTS Physician Survey was the last survey that included specific clinical data, including the 12 clinical vignettes listed in Table 3. These vignettes offer a unique view into the clinical practices of these physicians that is not attainable in other data sets. Finally, the survey data overlap the time when large increases of IMGs entering the field of Family Medicine began and provides a nice snapshot of how practicing Family Physicians differed based on the location of their medical training. This study identifies important differences between these physicians that warrant further investigation.

Comment 4: We have revised our discussion of the differing board certification rates on page 7, paragraph 1, to reflect Dr. Mick's statements.

Comment 5: We have expanded our discussion of the limitations of this study on page 8, last paragraph.

Reviewer Shoou-Yih Daniel Lee, Major Compulsory Revisions: The purpose of this paper is to answer the following question, "Do significant differences exist between IMG and USMG family physicians that warrant further investigation?" The percentage of IMG physicians entering the field of Family Medicine has increased dramatically each year starting in 1998. Our intent was to examine the field at a time when this trend was just starting in order to provide a baseline for comparison for future studies examining IMG and USMG family physicians.

With regards to our data analysis, a very small number of respondents chose the category 'neither agree/nor disagree.' Inclusion of that response category did not change the distribution of responses substantially, therefore, we reclassified it as missing data in study analyses. This same statistical analysis was performed in a previous study cited in the paper (reference 15). As our paper concludes, further research with more current data sets will be appropriate to more fully address the differences discovered in our analysis.

Minor Essential Revisions: The text was revised to clarify the intent of the statement on page 7.

Discretionary Revisions: Many of Dr. Lee's studies on the topic of International Medical Graduates, both on his own and in collaboration with Dr. Mick, have been reviewed and referenced in this study.

Sincerely,

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