

Reviewer's report

Title: The Providers of Health Services in Lebanon: A Survey of Physicians

Version: 1 **Date:** 14 August 2005

Reviewer: Paulo Ferrinho

Reviewer's report:

General

An interesting paper on the physician situation in Lebanon.

The major limitations of the paper are associated with: lack of clarity regarding methodological issues; and with the discussion.

The English should be reviewed.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

REVISIONS ON THE METHODS

The sampling strategy should be detailed. How was the stratification done? What was the sample size within strata? What is proportionate to the number of physicians? If not how were the results combined to achieve national statistics rather than regional statistics. The strategy to select physicians within strata was a simple random strategy?

The methodology of the face validation should be detailed.

The construction of the index of urbanizations should be better explained. How was this index used during the analysis.

The statistical analysis strategy should be explained in the methods section.

REVISIONS ON THE RESULTS

The grouping of medical specialties under GPs and non-GPs, where GPs includes internal medicine, paediatrics, and O&G is very misleading and should be avoided or renamed.

Reporting some times utilizes absolute numbers alone, other times resorts to percentages alone and sometimes to both of them. This should be standardised.

What is a "clinic"? From the meaning of the text it looks like it is a private consulting room, but I was not sure.

The two paragraphs of the section on "practice characteristics" are confusing. From it I cannot understand who works exclusively in one site, in two sites or in more than two sites. Towards the end of the second paragraph there is a reference to "private time" - what is private time?

Regarding the financing characteristics it might be more useful to present the results of the median rather than the mean. It would be useful to know the impact of dual or multiple practice on the income earned by doctors. Is there a difference between males and females? Is there a difference between medical specialties?

It would be useful to get figures on population per physician.

ON THE DISCUSSION

Rather than presenting the problem as just one of oversupply it would be useful to discuss it from two other perspectives: the imbalance in regional distribution; the predominant pattern of practice (solo practice), which is inefficient.

TABLES

At the end there are a number of tables which are not always referred to in the text.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

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

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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.