Reviewer's report

Title: Hypertension awareness, treatment and control in Africa: A Systematic Review

Version: 2 Date: 9 July 2013

Reviewer: Alexander Jenson

Reviewer's report:

Overall, this paper is a well-written and systematic analysis of hypertension in Africa, a useful and needed synthesis of many different papers on this important topic. It fills a unique place in the literature.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. Make sure that the references are all within the sentence—some times the references are after the “.”.

2. Introduction, paragraph 2, sentence 1

   the JAMA article you reference does not make this claim, but instead it is made in the WHO report that the JAMA article discusses. It would make more sense to cite the WHO report “Reducing risks to health, promoting healthy life” rather than the JAMA article.

3. Introduction, paragraph 3, sentence 3

   include a space in “2007found”. Also consider revising the sentence.

4. Methods, paragraph 1

   Please comment on methods for assessing hypertension. Were there any inclusion or exclusion criteria for studies based on how hypertension was assessed? Did you include studies that only measured BP once, twice, with a manual vs automatic sphygmomanometer? If there were no criteria, please justify.

5. Methods, paragraph 1
do you mean control is less than 90mmHg systolic? That is the cutoff used by the WHO for grade 1 hypertension.

6. Methods, paragraph 2
- insert space into “textsof”

7. Methods, paragraph 3, sentence 2
- Was there a threshold or statistical significance for factors that “predicted”? Were there criteria for which factors, ie p<0.05 in a multivariate logistic regression? Please comment on how methodologically factors were assessed for inclusion/exclusion.

8. Please recheck your results of awareness, treatment and control in Table 1. Speaking anecdotally from our study (Jenson et al), it is cited incorrectly with regards to sample size. The total is 469 with 307 females and 162 males, not 776 total with 307 females. I have not examined the other studies but please recheck to make sure those are accurately entered as well.

9. Also please recheck the “reason” column. Again speaking anecdotally our study showed significant gender based differences in awareness, treatment and control, with women having higher rates of awareness, treatment and control. This again would help if there was a systematic method for inclusion of predictive factors, as the included studies all used statistical means of proving factor association.

10. Discussion paragraph 2 sentence 2
- This statement could use a citation, referencing reference 8 (Gu et al) and 9 (He et al).

Discretionary Revisions
1. Methods paragraph 2 sentence 3
- It may be helpful to comment more on what factors prevented you from disaggregating certain studies. Also, could it be possible to compare rural vs. urban studies en bloc? This may provide another avenue for analysis.
2. Results paragraph 1
-
consider revising with single list of excluded studies rather than multiple short sentences that seem repetitive. You could say “We excluded six studies because....., 8 studies that....., etc. etc.”
3. Results paragraph 3 sentence 4
-
national wide survey could be nation wide.
4. Results paragraph 6 sentence 1
-
it would be helpful to remind readers what the definition of “awareness” is again here.
5. Results paragraph 7 sentence 3
-
you mean treatment rates, not control rates.
6. Discussion paragraph 2 sentence 4
-
place the citation after this sentence (McAlister et al) as the reference makes this claim as well.
7. Discussion paragraph 3
-
You make the claim that universal coverage improves diagnosis and treatment of hypertension. It may be helpful to comment on the difference between the coverage model and the current nationalized health care coverage that exists in many of these countries, such as Tanzania and Kenya who both subside care and treatment at government clinics and provide some care free of charge. The fact that there aren’t enough of these free resources doesn’t mean the governments don’t have a similar “universal coverage” model.
8. Discussion paragraph 5
-
A citation is needed for the 3rd to last paragraph regarding women being more health seeking because of contact during reproductive years. One possibility is: Fuentes, R., Ilmaniemi, N.,

9. Conclusion sentence 1

what do you mean “targets of control”? There is no earlier comment on what set target there is for control

ideally its 100% of treated

is that what you mean? You could revise to say “high levels”.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

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

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.