Reviewer's report

Title: Easier said than done!: Methodological challenges with conducting maternal death review research in Malawi

Version: 3 Date: 20 April 2013

Reviewer: Sue Fawcus

Reviewer's report:

The paper has been considerably reworked and reorganised. The purpose and methodology specifying that this paper represents a reflection of the 5 stages of conducting the audit process in Lilongwe; is much clearer and distinguishes this paper from the main study which presents the audit results. The authors have separated Results (reflections of the Lilongwe audit process) from theoretical discussion and literature from other sites which is now in a Discussion section. This makes the manuscript much clearer and allows better focus on the problems encountered in the actual study site. The addition of Table 2 illustrates some of the problems in assigning cause of death and is a useful addition.

The discussion presents a balanced formative review of the value and logistical challenges of conducting maternal death reviews. The addition of specific recommendations on solutions to improve the audit process makes the paper much more valuable and some of these solutions are summarised in table 3 which is an important addition to the article.

Minor revisions that the authors can do are:
1. Page 3, line 5; 'ff' should be 'if'
2. Page 6, under Methodology, line 1. delete "was"
3. Page 28, final paragraph. This is written as an instruction but should be a full sentence eg For researchers, there is a need to allocate more time ....... and to solicit feedback from....
4. I suggest that you refer to table 3 in the Discussion. It is a useful table and currently is only referred to at the end of the Conclusion

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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

Declaration of competing interests:
I have no competing interests