Author's response to reviews

Title: Mind the gaps and their implications for policy: a qualitative study of perceptions of healthcare professionals on challenges and proposed remedies for cervical cancer health seeking in post conflict northern Uganda

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Author's response to reviews:

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The Editor
BMC Family Practice

Dear Editor,

Re: Point-by-point response to the concerns of the reviewers of our manuscript entitled “Mind the gaps and their policy implications: a qualitative study of perceptions of healthcare professionals on challenges and proposed remedies for cervical cancer health seeking in post conflict northern Uganda”.

The manuscript is co-authored by Dr. Mwaka Amos Deogratius, Prof. Wabinga Henry and Prof. Mayanja Harriet-Kizza.

I am grateful to you, the editorial team and the reviewers for the succinct comments that have helped us improve on the quality of this manuscript tremendously.

I have worked with co-authors and solicited the help of a native English speaker who proof-read and made some adjustments in the manuscript.

The title has changed quite a bit to read: “Mind the gaps: a qualitative study of perceptions of healthcare professionals on challenges and proposed remedies for cervical cancer health seeking in post conflict northern Uganda”.

We have addressed all the concerns raised by the reviewers and are summarized as follows:

Reviewer 1: Prof. Janet Seeley.

1. We appreciate the importance she accorded to this manuscript.
2. Major Compulsory revisions
(a) Presentation of results
We presented results under themes; accompanied with an introduction of each section before presentation of quotes to illustrate the points. Detailed explanations and interpretations of the results are in the discussion section.

(b) Long quotes and short explanation of the quotes
We have shortened the quotes and included only those aspects of the respondent’s verbatim statements that directly illustrate the arguments being advanced.

(c) English language usage and sentences constructions
We have reviewed and improved on the usage of the English language. Long sentences have been shortened and ambiguous phrases and statements removed.
We removed all inappropriate expressions including that pointed out by the reviewer - “Challenging clinical situations shrouded with apathetic patients”.
We solicited the support of a native English speaker, and he reviewed the full manuscript and ensured appropriate English expressions and constructions.
The references have been formatted to comply with the BMC Family Practice requirements.

3. Discretionary revisions
We were unable to establish earlier views of these health workers on issues pertaining to cervical cancer specifically. A review of interview transcripts reveal that the reported challenges were specific to cervical cancer care, though by extension they may apply to other gynaecological and other cancers probably. However, the proposed remedies were provided in manners that would include other cancers as well.

Reviewer 2: Prof. Fiona Walter

1. We highly appreciate the synopsis provided by the reviewer pointing out the importance of this paper and that it makes an exciting addition to the developing world cancer care literature and thus worth publishing.

2. Minor essential revisions mainly concerning strengthening the qualitative report, use of English, and definitions.

(a) We adopted the more common and correct usage “help-seeking” instead of ‘health seeking for diagnosis and management of cervical cancer’ which would require a separate operational definition. Consistent usage of terms about similar concepts allow for validity and comparisons.

(b) Long quotations and inclusion of inappropriate details.
Quotations have been shortened and non-essential details removed.

(c) Abstract
Has been improved and unnecessary details removed.

(d) Clarity on views of respondents.
We have reviewed the full manuscript and ensured that the views reflect opinions of the operational health professionals about challenges they perceive cervical cancer patients and their families undergo; the proposed remedies are views of the health professionals about improvement to cervical cancer care.

(e) Specific errors and omissions outlined by page numbers; issues numbered 5 – 18 (g).

We have corrected the errors pointed out.
The language flow has been improved.
The percentages have been removed from the tables.
Inappropriate references have been corrected and or removed.
All the concerns (5 – 18 (g) have been addressed in the body of the revised manuscript.

We do hope that the response provided meets the standard for publication by the Journal and readers will find this paper a worthwhile addition to the frontiers of knowledge on cervical cancer care in the low- and middle-income countries.

We look forward to your positive considerations of this revised manuscript.

Yours Sincerely,
Amos Deogratius Mwaka