Reviewer's report

Title: Complicated malaria and other severe febrile illness in a pediatric ward in Libreville, Gabon

Version: 2 Date: 20 March 2012

Reviewer: Abraham Rexford Oduro

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions
1. Title: No comment

2. COMMENTS ON THE ABSTRACT:
The Objective as stated in the abstract is not supported by the available findings/evidence; suggestions like: - to determine the proportion of children with febrile illness hospitalised for primary diagnosis of malaria who had confirmed malaria. This is because primary diagnosis of malaria was the main criteria for administration.

Methods:
Needs clarification: Is the study involved those children who benefited from haematological measurements and microscopic diagnosis of malaria OR those children who presented with febrile illness and hospitalised for primary diagnosis of malaria. Please clarify;

Results:
Line 2: Sentence beginning Only 56.7% --------with final diagnosis of malaria had Plasmodium flaciparum has positive blood smears. Need some clarifications, does it mean that 56.7% of those as clinical malaria cases had Plasmodium flaciparum infection.
Line 5: Sentence may be rephrased “Respiratory tract infection was the leading cause of hospitalisation (41.1%) followed by ”
Line 6 and 9: “Co-infection” can be rephrased as co-morbidity since that could be interpreted as different malaria species.

3. BACKGROUND COMMENTS:
Line 4: During recent decades--------------- in many settings. You may add “though is presently declining” to this sentence
Line 10: in fact “opoka et al”, may be replaced with “ In fact evidence suggest” a higher mortality---
Line 13: the sentence beginning” In many endemic countries” should be referenced.
The aim of the study may be rephrased as suggested in the abstract section.
4. METHODS
Study site:
This section can be split into two; study site and study design and each describe in detail
For instance Line 1: A prospective and observational study is a design issue ............
The reason(s) why the study was restricted from June to December should be stated.
The reason why the study was restricted to one children hospital instead of the two in the town should also be stated.
Data collection:
Please consolidate the various statements on this section into sentences
Treatment: Describe in detail the drugs and treatments for the major diagnosis illness / diagnoses classified in this study.
Ethical consideration:
The reasons why the approval was not sought from a properly constituted ethical committee and also why oral consent had to be sought for study which is of not minimal risk should be stated.
RESULTS:
Paragraph one: study population
A complete trial log/study log should be described; Total hospital attendance, total number of children who attended hospital, total admitted, total number screened during study period, total number referred, and total admitted during into the study during the enrolment period and total who received haematological diagnosis.
The methods section states that the total annual capacity is about 1440 yet only 431 who had febrile illness were admitted.
Paragraph three Line 6
The sentence beginning with “Among the 168 treated for malaria” needs to be rephrased. There is a need to clarify the term pneumonia as used in this study. Not all pneumonias are infective and/or bacterial infection.
Malaria patients
Paragraph one/Line one/first sentence: “All malaria infections-----” this sentence is not clear. Suggestion “Approximately 23% (X/Y) of the participants had confirmed malaria infections. “Children with malaria (x/y) were significantly older than those without malaria(x/y) .

Paragraph two:
“The use of Bednet was associated with reduced risk of malaria; state the
proportions of infection in Bednet and nonbednet users, the odds ratio with their CI and the P-value (OR; X versus Y; P<....).

DISCUSSION

Paragraph One

Line1: First sentence should be referenced
Line 9: sentence beginning “Clinical diagnosis through-----“should be referenced

Paragraph two:

Line 7; co infection can be changed to co-morbidity which is less ambiguity.
Paragraph two the last sentence should be referenced

Paragraph three:

Line three and the second sentence beginning “This suggests” should be referenced

Line 9 – the number 9 after the full stop should be corrected

Last sentence: Any speculation why the severe anaemia has not seen significant change since 2001 will be help to readers.

Paragraph four:

Line 15 and Last but one sentence the number 9 after the full stop should be corrected

Other suggestions:

There is a need for additional discussion of the study findings /results and to draw inferences from other publications outside Gabon.

A paragraph on Limitations of this study should be clearly stated in the discussion

Conclusions

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests