Reviewer's report

Title: Mothers-in-law's role in antenatal care decision-making in Nepal: A qualitative study

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Reviewer: Julie Cwikel

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the authors well defined?
The question is well defined and the methods are appropriate for this type of study. What disturbs me about this article is the very strong correlation between mother-in-laws being illiterate and mothers being partly literate and fathers being completely literate. Given that it is a qualitative study, there are not enough cases so that we can test the notion that the mother—in-law's role is more a function of illiteracy and lack of understanding of the importance of antenatal care than their larger social role.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described? It might be advisable to use more commonly cited materials in describing the methods used instead of the relatively esoteric materials cited (refs 23-26). See the Malawi article mentioned below for more standard methods texts.

3. Are the data sound?

I have a problem with the data because of the complete overlap between lack of formal education among the mothers-in-law. This needs to be addressed in the discussion and limitations of the study.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition? Yes.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?

The discussion does not address how it is possible to change behaviors, attitudes and cognitions among mothers-in-law. This may be a "generation effect" that should be addressed as such. In our work with pregnant and post-partum women, we also run up against the grandmothers' generation individuals who say "why should I join your volunteer program (to give one on one support) when I didn't have this kind of support when I was pregnant?". We try to soften them up by remarking "don't you wish you had had such support?" It doesn't always manage to change minds but perhaps there is a way to develop "grandmother health education" by including some of the more positive grandmothers who show some empathy for their daughter-in-laws. Another option: show the strong connection between antenatal care and good birth outcome and attended birth and develop some positive, upbeat outreach to get to the grandmothers generation. Again, the article on Malawi is informative on this issue too (see
What is the importance of this work if it doesn't address how things might be different with health education focused on the grandmothers' generation? There is a parallel work recently on grandmothers (mothers-in-law) in Malawi in which they go beyond the data collected to suggest ways of building interventions that address the role of the grandmothers.

Please incorporate this paper which is very parallel (but addresses post-partum feeding issues) in literature review and discussion.

Kerr, Rachel Bezman et al. (2008). "We grandmothers know plenty..." Social Science and Medicine, 1095-1105.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated? See #3 above. A larger sample and a quantitative research design might have addressed these issues and should be included in the limitations.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished? It seemed so.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found? Not exactly. Because of the overlap between grandmothers and illiteracy, this should be acknowledged in the abstract as well.

9. Is the writing acceptable?

There are lots of typos throughout the manuscript.
Examples - e.g. p. 12- "Elevated? family status"
p. 21 "health care., Hence"
p. 29 – "Morbidityin"
p. 30 "husband'sinvolvement" and similar types of problems in the bibliography.