Author's response to reviews

Title: Causes of perinatal death at a tertiary care hospital in Northern Tanzania 2000-2010: A registry based study

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Covering letter for resubmission of the revised manuscript

Bergen November 1st

Dear Editors, BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth

RE: MS: 1903851561759725

Thank you for the invitation to resubmit our manuscript entitled "Causes of perinatal deaths in Northern Tanzania 2000-2010: A registry based study". We appreciate the helpful comments. We have tried to follow the advice, and the revised manuscript should now be improved.

Our response to the reviewers’ comments follow below. We have included 3 new references from Tanzanian studies (Urassa et al 2003, 2005 and 2012); these are in track changes in the revised manuscript. Changes in the text (insertions and deletions) are all in track changes.

We hope that the revised manuscript is acceptable and look forward to hearing from you soon.
All co-authors are informed about the revision and have received the final manuscript.

Sincerely,

Blandina Theophil Mmbaga

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Response to reviewers’ comments

Reviewer 1: Jan Jaap H.M Erwich

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<td><strong>Conclusion and recommendation</strong></td>
<td>The paper should carry the important political statement that the quality of perinatal care must be improved for these women as fast as possible</td>
<td>In the last paragraph of Conclusions and recommendations, the text now reads: In conclusion, a future decline in perinatal mortality depends on interventions at different levels. Recommended interventions need to be implemented at the hospital level, with respect to the referral system, and with respect to antenatal care and community education so as to improve perinatal outcomes as soon as possible.</td>
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<td>The authors do give recommendations, but more detailed on how to obtain the improvement and how to implement them would be important.</td>
<td>We have added some more detailed information in the second paragraph of Conclusions and recommendations on improvement at the institutional level using continuous medical training programmes, regular perinatal reviews and feedback mechanisms. We also recommend further studies to identify the most important sources of delay in the referral system.</td>
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<td>The cause of perinatal death did not change over the 10 years. Whether this is due to changes to a more difficult patient case mix is not addressed. Or lack or quality improvement is the real cause. Can they put this in relation to culture or attitude in their hospital?</td>
<td>To further explore the time trends we have modified Figure 2 by adding separate graphs for non-referred and referred. The figure shows a constant perinatal mortality in the non-referred group and an increased mortality in the referred group. To answer the question about culture and attitude we think that a qualitative study is needed. We therefore find it difficult to discuss on this issue.</td>
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### Reviewers comments

#### Minor revision

- The last part of the sentence on the ethical approval subsection “and informed consent…prior to the interview” needs to be removed and placed in the data collection subsection

- The total of males and females is not 1958, and the percentage of 917 out of 1958 is not 48.6. Was the sex of 15 perinatal deaths unknown or were 932 female?

- Table 2 the column of birth weight 1500-2499, the calculations of perinatal death need to be revised

- Table 3, the total of unexplained asphyxia is 425 (353+72) instead of 423 and that of unexplained immaturity is 46 (39+7) instead of 48.

#### Results

- We have also added the information that sex of 15 perinatal deaths was missing or unknown.

#### Discretionary Revisions

- The introduction in the second paragraph, second sentence needs to be re-phrased as it may be difficult for international readers or readers not working on health issues to know the zones used by the Tanzania Ministry of Health

- Data analysis the last word “estimated” can be replaced with the word “calculated”

- Discussion Maternal disease and abruption placenta subsection, last sentence. The author may expand discussion on the quality of screening for the hypertension in Tanzania giving studies which were conducted in Tanzania for instance by Urassa et al in Rufiji

#### Authors responses

- Done.

- We have also added the information that sex of 15 perinatal deaths was missing or unknown.

- The sentence is revised.

- Done.

- We have added 3 Tanzanian references and added text accordingly.