Reviewer’s report

Title: Survival of neonates in rural Southern Tanzania: Does the place of delivery matter?

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Reviewer: Tarek Meguid

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Major Compulsory Revision

The major problem I have with this study is that it presents two cohorts of neonates for three consecutive years, that have survived pregnancy and delivery, one born in a health centre and one in the community and treats them as similar. The similarities are that the mothers seem to be comparable in both groups, but there is no information on the pregnancies and the deliveries. It is not at all clear whether these neonates are comparable.

The point that is made in the article that continuity of care is essential and that basically all neonates, once they have survived childbirth, are exposed to the same level of care (or lack of it), whether they are born in a health facility or in the community is very important and merits publication, in fact needs to be published. But that is not the same as answering the question put forward in the title of the article: does the place of delivery matter when it comes to neonatal survival? This requires much more discussion and the data presented is a very good basis on which to discuss, but is not enough.

If no additional data on pregnancies and deliveries is available then the discussion needs to address that. What were the reasons for those neonatal deaths? What was the mortality within the first day after delivery in both settings? How many of the neonatal deaths of babies born in the health centre occurred after discharge? It might also be that many more of the babies born in the health centre would have died had they been born in the community and then the place of birth might well matter very much; it might also be that the quality of care in the health service is such that there is no difference between the service given there and in the community. Without knowing more about the pregnancies, deliveries and neonates, I feel it is not possible to answer the research question.

What seems to be clear from this study is that independent of place of delivery, the services available for neonates seem to be the same for all neonates. I am not sure though whether this is a true assumption.

I feel this study needs to be published after revision addressing those points and a more comprehensive discussion of the limitations of the study.

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

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**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'