Reviewer's report

Title: Timing and reasons for coming late for the first antenatal care visit by pregnant women at Mulago hospital

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Reviewer: babatunde adedokun

Reviewer's report:

Reviewer Report for the article titled ‘Timing and Reasons for coming late for the first antenatal care visit by pregnant women at Mulago Hospital'

The present article has examined the reasons why women present late for antenatal care at a tertiary hospital in Uganda. Though the paper has a potential to improve care of women attending care at this hospital and those in similar settings the paper needs an extensive revision in the presentation of results and discussion of the findings.

Major Compulsory Revisions

General comments

This article examines the reasons for late presentation however there is little or no background information about the proportion of women who utilize antenatal care (ANC) or present late for care in Uganda or in similar settings. Given that the study is mainly descriptive one would have expected a detailed scrutiny of the reasons for presenting late and a detailed discussion of implications of the findings particularly for interventions at tertiary centres, other levels of care or in the community which could reduce the occurrence of late presentation.

Title
1. The city and country needs to be added

Abstract
2. The methods section mentions knowledge about antenatal care as part of the data collected. Does knowledge here refer to knowledge about when to present for antenatal care?

3. The results section should include socio-demographic characteristics such as the mean age and SD, and educational level of the women. The sentence starting with ‘110 (27.5%)’ after the semicolon should be separated from the preceding sentence and should stand alone.

4. The conclusion does not agree with the findings presented in the results section of this abstract. The study did not show that women were not informed about the right gestational age

Background
5. A discussion of conceptual frameworks or theories of those factors which influence delay as reported by previous authors will serve as a useful addition to
the background to enable a clearer understanding of those factors which influence late presentation.

6. The background will benefit from a statement of the problem of the failure to attend ANC, late presentation in sub-Saharan Africa at large and Uganda specifically. What are the statistics for maternal mortality, ANC utilization in Uganda? How serious is delayed presentation in sub-Saharan Africa. Statistics are needed.

7. The second paragraph 5th line:
   ‘These and other studies emphasize the importance of antenatal care in insuring a good outcome for both mother and baby’

The Nigerian study referred to here only examines anemia which is one of several problems women could present with at booking. The proportion with anemia among the women in the Nigerian study should be included. The authors should also state these ‘other studies’ which they refer to.

8. Second paragraph line 7: ‘Several factors affecting the utilization of antenatal care in developing countries have been identified. These include: maternal education, husband’s education, marital status, availability, cost, household income, women’s employment, media exposure and having a history of obstetric complications. Cultural beliefs and ideas about pregnancy also had an influence on antenatal care use.’

The authors need to provide the references for all the factors mentioned. Many similar statements in the background are not referenced.

Methods

Study site

9. Please provide background socioeconomic information about Uganda and its key demographic and health indicators. More information about the Mulago Hospital is needed concerning the number of beds and number of deliveries.

Study design

10. Line 7: ‘We used an obstetric ultrasound scan to determine the gestational age at presentation for those pregnant mothers who were not sure of the date’

The use of interviews for one group of women and ultrasound scans for another introduces inconsistencies in the estimates of the gestational age. All women should have had an ultrasound scan done. Those women who claimed they knew their last normal menstrual period may not have remembered the dates accurately.

11. The methods section does not indicate the sampling method. How were the women selected? Were there any inclusion or exclusion criteria such as previous medical illness for example? If there were no exclusion criteria these should be mentioned in the discussion.

Data Collection:

12. The last sentence is a repetition of what has been mentioned under the study.
design

Data Analysis

13. Concerning the last sentence, why was this choice made. Also this rule was
not applied in the results and discussion

Results

14. ‘Table one’ would be better written as ‘Table 1’
15. ‘Reasons for coming late for the first antenatal care visit’
The fourth line states the different reasons. The authors should include the percentages
In this paragraph for many of the figures stated it is not clear on what
denominators they are based. Please clarify the denominators at the beginning of the sentences.

2nd paragraph under the section for reasons for reporting late:
‘When the study participants were asked that who decides that they seek antenatal care, 162 (40.5%) said it was them and their partner together. However, there were other people that were also reported to influence this decision and these where the woman’s mother, father, aunt, grandmother, sister and friend.

Please report the % of women who took the decision alone. Also what are the percentages for the other family members

The reasons mentioned in the last paragraph for late presentation are not clear. Why are some reasons (based on 180 women and shown in Table 4) classified as other reasons? Is the commonest reason ‘that they did not have any problem with current pregnancy and so saw no reason to come early for antenatal care’? If yes then the authors should say so.

16. For those women who had sought ANC elsewhere what were these places and what were their percentages

17. All the reasons should be placed on the same denominator (all women) so comparisons can be made.

18. The authors should report the proportions and characteristics of those women who saw no reason to come but knew the right gestational age at presentation

Discussion

19. The studies stated in the first paragraph lines 4 and 5 of the discussion studied women presenting for ANC and not those presenting late which was the focus in this present study. The average gestational ages at presentation might not be comparable

20. The discussion does not explain the reasons given for late presentation, why the women could have given those reasons and their implications for interventions targeting this group of women. How do the reasons found compare
to other reasons reported from other settings or in Uganda. Are there any reports from secondary or primary centres or other referral sites about quality of antenatal care services?

21. The authors state in the 4th paragraph that the women in this study were of low socioeconomic class. Does this represent the class of women who usually attend this hospital or is it peculiar to those women who will usually present late.

22. The second paragraph discussed those who had abortion. Is the abortion rate found in the study typical of your setting? It deserves comments.

23. The authors should discuss the main reasons mentioned in considerable detail and offer suggestions about how to prevent late presentations in future pregnancies. It is very difficult to identify the commonest reasons for late presentation based on the current presentation of results.

Conclusion

24. The conclusion and recommendations are not in line with the results presented.

25. Tables

Please remove cause of abortion from Table 2.

Table 3 is unnecessary, only report the prose.

Arrange the reasons given in Table 4 from the most common to the least reported and include the commonest reasons mentioned in the prose.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.