Author's response to reviews

Title: Recurrence of perinatal death in Northern Tanzania: A registry based cohort study

Authors:

Michael J Mahande (michael.mahande@isf.uib.no)
Anne K Dalveit (Anne.Daltveit@isf.uib.no)
Blandina T Mmbaga (blaymt@yahoo.com)
Joseph Obure (jobure2002us@yahoo.com)
Gleard Masenga (drgmasenga@yahoo.com)
Rachel Manongi (rmanongi@yahoo.co.uk)
Rolv T Lie (Rolv.Lie@smis.uib.no)

Version: 5 Date: 28 June 2013

Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editor,

Thank you very much for the invitation to resubmit our manuscript entitled: **Recurrence of perinatal death in Northern Tanzania: A registry based cohort study**. We appreciate the reviewers for useful comments and suggestions for further improvement of our manuscript. We have addressed all the reviewers’ comments and suggestions, and hope that the paper can now be accepted for publication in your journal. Please find our responses indicated in a red color below. Changes in the main text are all in track changes.
Reviewer 1: Birgit Reime.

No comments

Reviewer2: Regine Unkels

Discretionary Revisions

Methodology

Paragraph 5:
My previous comment concerning sample size related to the sample size calculation. I’m sorry that I didn’t formulate this clearer. You didn’t mention whether this was done and if yes, what the number of subjects was to achieve statistical power.
This was not done. Since we used the whole birth registry data for women who delivered in our setting over the study period there was no need for sample size calculation. Our focus was mainly on estimation of recurrence risks and the power of the comparisons is reflected in the width of the confidence intervals.

Limitations

Paragraph 3, first phrase and 5, last phrase: I think that women with perinatal loss in their first pregnancy are more likely to change the hospital for the next delivery because they may associate the perinatal loss to substandard care in the previous facility. As well they may not want to be reminded of the previous loss.
We have incorporated the suggestions in the main text.

Minor Essential Revisions

Discussion

Paragraph 6, last phrase: I would suggest to replace the term “birth” here with “delivery” as it is related to the mother.
We have replaced the term birth with delivery in the main text.

Limitations

Paragraph 3, first phrase: ....compared to women who deliver a "healthy" child......
Paragraph 7, first phrase: “The large sample size allowed us to "estimate" significant differences...”
The suggestions have been taken care of in the main text.

Reviewer 3: Bettina Utz

Minor essential revisions

Page 7

Not clear in several text passages: do you mean mothers who lost child in first pregnancy or in first recorded pregnancy when you say “women who lost their child in the first pregnancy...”
We meant mothers who lost a child in the first recorded pregnancy. We have now consistently used the term in first recorded pregnancy.

Page 8

•Incomplete, data refers to? “Table 3 shows that recurrence risk was 90.6 per 1000 birth”: for which group? For women who lost their child in first (recorded) pregnancy???
We have noted the omission of text as pointed by the reviewer. We referred to women who lost their child in first recorded pregnancy. We have incorporated the missing word in the text
•Same applies to “women who lost their child in the first pregnancy were…” fist or first recorded pregnancy?
The comment has been noted and addressed in the text; we referred to first recorded pregnancy.

•“This amounts to a 3.2 fold relative risk” for who? For mothers who lost child in first reported pregnancy?
We have added the missing word “for mothers who lost child in first reported pregnancy” in the text.

Page 9:

•Whole paragraph “in effect, the relative risk of recurrence high baby had normal birth weight, but low when low birth weight...” confusing for the reader. Should it not be the other way round? Especially confusing when comparing above statement with information in 1st paragraph on page 10 “ If a previous baby was lost by perinatal death and was also born preterm or had low birth weight, the risk of PND in the subsequent pregnancy was as high as...”
Yes, we understand the reviewers concern, but there two aspects the previous sentence refers to. Those are the relative risk of recurrence of perinatal death while the later refers to absolute recurrence of perinatal death. We have modified the text to highlight this difference.

•First paragraph in discussion section rather long, could be written crisper, as all findings already in the result section
We have tried to shorten the this paragraph to conform with the reviewer’s advise.

•On page 11 last paragraph “using reproductive history data” would actually better fit in the limitation section, but the last sentence of that paragraph is repeated in first paragraph on page 14. So check if these two paragraphs can be joined, as the main message is short: data limited on neonatal deaths, as death might have occurred after discharge.
We understand the reviewer’s concern regarding use of reproductive history data, but in our context we used reproductive history data to validate our estimates. We agree with the reviewer’s suggestion to join suggested paragraphs, we have now joined the last sentence in this paragraph with the one on page 14.

Discretionary revisions

Page 3:

•Linkage between sentences missing: “Pregnancy complications are among…Perinatal mortality is considered…”
We have added the missing word “of”
Sources do not belong into the text and should be in the reference section: “4.7 per 1000 births… (reported by the Medical Birth registry….)”
We have moved the source to the reference list, and cited in the main text.
Page 7

Avoid to have sources in the text and put them into references: “statistical analysis performed using SPSS version (http://...”)”
We have moved the source to the reference list, and cited in the main text.

Grammar: “of losing the next baby in an early perinatal death”; better rephrase
The sentence has been rephrased, and it now reads “risk of early neonatal death in the next pregnancy”

Page 8/9

Grammar: low birth weight had a risk of perinatal death in their next baby of 10% of losing their next baby regardless…”- maybe better to write: LBW was associated with a 14% risk of having a perinatal death in a consecutive pregnancy…
We do agree with the reviewer’s suggestion to rephrase the sentence. There are two different conditions i.e. mothers whose previous baby survived or died perinatally. Therefore we have rephrased the sentence. It is now reads “Mothers who lost a baby in the previous pregnancy who was born preterm or low birth weight had a 14% risk of having a perinatal death in a consecutive pregnancy. The risk of perinatal death in a consecutive pregnancy was still high (10%) even for mothers whose previous baby survived but was born preterm.

No need for subheading “comparisons with other studies” in the discussion section
This was previously suggested by one of the reviewer.

Avoid judgements: “it is surprising…”- would remove that sentence
We have removed the word surprisingly as suggested by the reviewer.

Wording unclear: “symmetric reproductive patterns”???
We used the term symmetric reproductive patterns to reflect the same reproductive patterns between women in the backwards cohort (using reproductive history data) and those in the prospective cohort (linked data). Using this assumption, the backwards cohort should be a mirror image of the prospective cohort.

Paragraph 2 on page 14:

“Women who experienced…” actually this belong to paragraph on selection bias, as women who had a previous loss are more likely to deliver at KCMC
We agree with the reviewers’ suggestion, we have moved this paragraph to the selection on bias.

Page 13, first paragraph

Would use discussion section to discuss assumptions: page 13, first paragraph
“There is some possibility…”

Generally: start with strengths first and then come to limitations and not the other way round.
We have reversed the limitations over the strengths of the study as per reviewers’ suggestions.
All in all: quite wordy- could be a bit shorter and crisper.
We have also added new references 7, 12 and 13 instead of using sources as pointed out by the reviewer.