Reviewer’s report

Title: Indirect cost of maternal deaths in the WHO African Region in 2010

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Reviewer: julia walsh

Reviewer’s report:

The method that the authors use is unusual and not the standard method for valuing lives for health interventions. Using other methods The authors do explain why they have used this method as an easy summary method instead of the more usual approach valuing costs of illness and death. If this method was used widely for other interventions, then this method could provide a more comparable yardstick to assess relative economic costs of various illnesses.

The authors clearly explain through example calculations how these estimates of indirect costs were made.

The data that the authors use for maternal mortality is 10 years old. The GDPPC is only 4 years old and that is fine. I understand that using old data when maternal mortality levels were higher may raise the costs and make the results appear larger, however, more recent data would make the results more comparable with other analyses done in the same way. The recent estimates of 2010 maternal mortality have just come out in the last several months. The authors use a discount rate of 3% which is the lowest that is commonly used for economic analyses. 5% is the more usual discount rate. The authors should add a comment in the discussion about why they chose to use 3% and by how much the results would decline with use of higher discount rates. The authors use 74 years life expectancy for Africa instead of the ideal life expectancy of 80 or more which is frequently used. This probably would make little difference since these extra years of life are heavily discounted because they are occurring 30+ years in the future. However, I would appreciate an explanation of why the authors chose this life expectancy.

The manuscript is clearly written and easily understandable. The title and abstract are satisfactory The discussion clearly states the limitations.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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.