Reviewer's report

Title: Exploring the first delay: a qualitative study of home deliveries in Makwanpur district Nepal

Version: 2 Date: 6 December 2013

Reviewer: Mary M Cameron

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All of the comments are compulsory revisions.

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined? The topic has been researched in many other settings in Nepal and therefore it is not a substantial contribution. Framing it in terms of development goals is problematic for a health related journal; I would expect to see more about community, family and individual health care needs taking precedence. Also, framing some barriers as sociocultural or cultural is very simplistic. There’s an enormous ethnographic literature on women in Nepal, none of which is cited.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described? The methods seem appropriate though the authors don’t explain why they only translated half of the interviews. They also use quantitative analytical terms like tabulation that are unclear in this context, while also referring to comparison to another study that doesn’t seem integrated into the discussion.

3. Are the data sound? Hard to evaluate as the numbers are small and the research experience of the team is not discussed. The narrative sections are interesting. Some of the claims, like the hours of hospitals, are not correct. Very few demographic characteristics like age are given.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition? No. I found the data to be simplistic and not well contextualized. There are more traditional health providers than shamans, who typically don’t assist in deliveries, but midwives do. I found the parenthetic (intervention) and (control) and other such notes in the document to be unusual and distracting, and more appropriate for the researchers own future work, but not relevant to a research-based article. Certain claims are not supported by citing the relevant literature, such as women not having decision-making authority, or having little contact with others in the community.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data? The discussion of status is limited to only patrilocal residence. A much better context should be provided, particularly given the ethnic heterogeneity of the sample.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated? Somewhat, although the context of interviews isn’t discussed and the familiarity of the community with the research
team and the research team’s experience with ethnographic methods isn’t fully
discussed.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building,
both published and unpublished? I didn’t see such a discussion.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found? Yes.

9. Is the writing acceptable? Not really. The ms. read like a first draft with several
style problems.

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

**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.