Reviewer's report

Title: Rural Tanzanian women's awareness of danger signs of obstetric complications

Version: 3 Date: 26 December 2008

Reviewer: Samuel Anya

Reviewer's report:

Major Essential Revisions

Introduction

1. Paragraph 3, sentences 4-6.

“…a study in Rufiji showed that compliance in emergency referral advice is low. Half of the women with obstetric complications referred did not arrive at the referral hospitals [11]. This shows that awareness of danger signs of obstetric complications may be one of the factors contributing to failure to follow the referral advice.”

The authors suggest that a failure to adhere to emergency referral advice indicates a lack of awareness of danger signs. Presumably a woman who has been referred as an emergency would know that she has a complication. Furthermore, such a woman has presented to one facility already or been seen by a health worker and so is no longer in the first phase of delay where awareness of danger signs would be relevant. The situation described would rather suggest that factors other than awareness would be the problem such as the transportation difficulties alluded to in the description of the study setting in the Methods section.

1.1 It may be rephrased to state that late or non-presentation by women with obstetric complications remains a problem. One reason may be lack of awareness of danger signs or lack of awareness of significance of symptoms or complications.

Discussion

1. Paragraph 3, sentences 3-5

“Higher awareness of vaginal bleeding after delivery is also reported in a poor fishing community in Karachi, Pakistan [13]. Excessive vaginal bleeding after delivery is the most visible sign and the most common cause of maternal death immediately after delivery [5, 14]. The mean interval from the onset of postpartum bleeding to death is two hours in contrast to an average of 12 hours for bleeding during pregnancy and delivery [14].”

1. 2 It appears the authors wish to highlight the importance of vaginal bleeding
and also explain why it was the most commonly recognized danger sign. However, these sentences are hanging loosely and need to be reconstructed to clarify the point.

2. Paragraph 5, sentence 4.

"Introducing appropriate Safe Motherhood information in primary schools to girls before they become pregnant is recommended [17]."

2.1 This sentence would be more appropriate at the end of Paragraph 6 which discusses education.

3. Paragraphs 5, 8 and 9

In the paragraphs above, the authors recommend increasing the time allocated for counselling, increasing supervision by Ministry of Health and re-training and updating health workers with regard to their communication skills. However, the study did not explore whether or not the pregnant women were counselled on danger signs during antenatal care and if so, how this is done. Recommendations should be based on the findings of the study.

a. How much time was spent on counselling during antenatal care?

b. What was the frequency and quality of supervision? Were these adequate compared to national standards/guidelines?

c. Has training taken place and if so, what was the content and quality?

3.1 Since these were not part of the study, the recommendations referred to are generic but unrelated to the study itself and should be dropped or phrased as areas for further study and linked to the last two sentences in the Discussion section.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. Paragraph 3, sentence 3

a. Change “Presently…” to Currently or At present

b. “…it is expected that majority of women to have received information…” change to would have received or receive

2. Paragraph 3, sentence 4

a. “…compliance in emergency referral advice…” change to compliance with or adherence to

3. Paragraph 8, sentence 3

“Studies from Tanzania, The Gambia, Zimbabwe and Nepal, report that less than three minutes are spent on individual counseling per consultation in antenatal clinics [15, 24-26]”

Reference 15 relates to the study in The Gambia and Reference 24 to the Nepal study. The order in which the countries are listed should be rearranged to match
the order in the reference list.

**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