Reviewer's report

Title: Introduction of a qualitative perinatal audit at Muhimbili National Hospital, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

Version: 1 Date: 19 June 2009

Reviewer: Sithembiso Velaphi

Reviewer's report:

Summary
This paper is reporting on a perinatal audit conducted at Muhimbili National hospital, in Tanzania. It is mainly reporting on suboptimal care factors and their contribution to mortality among births that were conducted in this hospital. This is an important study to report especially for those areas where there is high perinatal mortality rate, as this identifies areas where improvements can be made. It is important that all institutions conducting births perform this kind of perinatal audits. Therefore it is important that the kind of information reported on this paper is shared with others working in obstetric and neonatal care.

It appears that the internal auditor reviewed the patient's files on her/his own and wrote narratives from the case notes and forwarded them to the external auditors. That is the external auditors made their assessments based on the internal auditors narratives, and did not review the original patient's notes. It is not clear if the other members of the team involved in obstetric and neonatal care in this hospital were part of the reviews looking at the factors that were felt to be suboptimal in caring for their patients.

General comments
1. The question is well defined but could even be more clearer if authors can reword or shorten the objective of this study.
2. Methods are well describe and appropriate, but it would have been more appropriate if all auditors were given the original patient's notes to assess for the suboptimal factors.
3. Data are sound they need to recheck their calculations especially the stillbirth rates and perinatal mortality rates.
4. Data deposition and reporting is fine.
5. Discussions are clearer, it would be even better if they can discuss more on the lack of agreement amongst the auditors.
6. References appropriate and previous work done in this area is appropriately acknowledged.
7. I would suggest that they change the title to reflect what is reported on the paper for example they can change the title to something like "Suboptimal care in stillbirths and neonatal deaths based on a perinatal audit at Muhimbili National
"...". It is not clear if there was enough information for them to comment on antenatal care - if that is the case I would suggest that they remove "antenatal" in the abstract.

8. The writing is acceptable, minor grammatical errors.

9. I have no major concerns about the study therefore no major revisions suggested on my part. See discretionary and minor revisions suggested below.

10. I am not able to comment on the statistics regarding degree of agreement. They need to state in their methods as to what statistical methods they used to get the p-values they have shown in page 6.

Specific comments
Discretionary revisions
1. See the comment on title and abstract above.
2. To add "in stillbirths and neonates weighing >1500g" in Table 2
3. Page 2, 2nd sentence remove "even at tertiary level", as it assumes that they also looked at other levels, and this is not reflected in this report

Minor revisions
1. Page 2, 1st sentence under conclusion of abstract - remove "s" in "needs"
2. Page 3, 3rd line change "MDG5" to "MDG4"
3. Page 3, paragraph (para) 2, line 3- PMR should be expressed per all births, not live births.
4. Under Results page 6, Please recheck your calculation on stillbirth rate and perinatal mortality rate under results. If you exclude the unclassified I would expect your calculation for stillbirth rate to be 240/3.767 = 63.7; and PMR to be 305/3.767 = 81.
5. Also recheck your percentages in the first sentence in page 7.
6. Page 8, under Delayed Management, please state the averages and ranges of duration/ time ambulances took to reach hospital in hours; and the same for the delays in CS.
7. In page 11 and 12 last and first paragraph respectively the authors have used the word "material", it is not clear as to what they are referring to.
8. It is not clear as to where did the authors derive the comment in page 22 para 3 that "1 in 4 perinatal deaths ... could be attributed .... obstetric care, which is similar to the 25% they have put in their conclusion.
9. In Table 3 "Failure to resuscitate a newborn" is only detected by the internal auditor - what is the possibly explanation for this - may be they need to comment on this under discussion. For the same field I would suggest that they put "0" under the external auditors instead of leaving it blank.
10. Please show what your abbreviations stand for.
**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests