Reviewer's report

Title: Maternal morbidity in the first year after childbirth in Mombasa Kenya; a needs assessment

Version: 1 Date: 23 June 2009

Reviewer: Hussein lesio Kidanto

Reviewer's report:

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
The question is ill-defined, it is not clear whether there is a policy within the study area for women to have post partum care, is the problem under utilization or nonexistence of the services? It would be useful to have a sentence explaining and summarising what is the gap. The author should link his findings in his previous work on postpartum morbidity among HIV positive women in Kenya.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
The methods need more details, why did the authors choose one year to study postpartum maternal morbidity? The authors seem to use the term postpartum and afterbirth interchangeably, in the background authors very well defined the term postpartum period according to WHO. Do they relate the morbidity in their study to pregnancy?, details on ethical issue needs to be addressed more clearly, patients who had positive HIV and syphilis results how were they contacted, how many were not found and how many managed to be treated.

3. Are the data sound?
Yes but the tables could be simplified – for example percentages should be rounded to the nearest whole number. Tables should include number and percentage or percentage only to make them less crowded and easy to read.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition? yes

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
The discussion would be strengthened by a more detailed presentation of the findings as compared to previous studies. Most of the previous studies he quoted concentrated on the peueperium period, the authors should discuss the advantage of their methodology of including one year post partum period as compared to the previous studies.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
There is not enough discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the study. It is not really clear what is the relationship between self-reported symptoms and
clinically verifiable conditions in this study. Validity studies for self-reported signs and symptoms of a range of reproductive morbidity depict that such information has limited utility for identifying medically defined conditions but is important for assessing perceptions of ill-health. Most of the time this type of self reported ill health is associated with various forms of recall and response bias. The authors seem to conclude that the year after child birth women have high level of morbidity, how do they relate the morbidities to pregnancy? Especially in women who are so labelled late postpartum?

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
Yes, however most references are for studies done outside Kenya ,it would be appropriate to quote more studies done in Kenya about postpartum morbidity or state clearly if this is the first work of its kind in Kenya.

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

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field, however, it is more for local consumption since the findings are not generalisable

**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