Reviewer’s report

Title: An Assessment of the Quality of Care for Children in Eighteen Randomly Selected District and Sub-district Hospitals in Bangladesh

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Reviewer: Elizabeth Molyneux

Reviewer’s report:

WHO has an assessment tool to be used in hospitals in resource-limited settings. The tool allows the audit of many and varied sections of the hospital to try to find out where in the health delivery chain of care deficiencies have arisen.

This type of audit was carried out in 18 randomly selected district and sub district hospitals in one area of Bangladesh.

Major comments

1. Random selection was not explained – was it a pin in the map? The toss of a coin? etc

The findings were depressing – there were universal problems at all levels and in all hospitals - from unavailable equipment to poor case management and poor physical structures. This was despite IMCI having been introduced into the country several years ago and finding IMCI trained staff in almost every hospital.

2. The authors note that they have no control data with which to compare their findings and instead of compared their finding with those of other audit in similar hospitals in other countries. Findings are not dissimilar.

Major comments:

It would be very helpful if the audit provided some positive steps to be taken to rectify the situations. The authors note that retraining and monitoring is not provided. But as they also state – what is the point of training if the essential drugs are unable? Reading this paper I kept thinking, why is it like is? Are units underfunded, personnel demotivated, managers far removed from clinical need and practice? How can this be improved? If, as the authors rightly state, it is not helpful to only strengthen one link in the chain of care; then what can be done without vast financial investment?

3. We have no background to staffing, numbers of patients seen in OPD, inpatients etc for these hospitals so it is difficult to visualise the problems that they face?

4. Is access difficult?

5. Are fees paid?
6. More references to other audits are needed. In the discussion there is a sentence that states that other audits found similar problems in other countries but no references other than one paper of English et al form Kenya are quoted.

7. Why is the problem so, literally, universal?

8. Nolan et al found various problems in the chain of care of children in 7 district hospitals in low resourced settings in 2002. This paper implies that there has been no progress since then. If not, then why not? Nolan et al found monitoring and triage areas of particular concern – so do the authors of this paper. Can they not try to provide some solutions. As it stands the paper simply quantifies the deficiencies.

Minor comments.
There are numerous typographical and grammatical errors.
In some paragraph the English could be improved.
The tables need better explanation of what the numerical contents actually refer too.

I am happy to send the authors their paper with sticky notes on it to help them with these corrections.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**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