Reviewer's report

Title: Factors influencing implementation of Ministry of Health-led Private Medicine Retailer Programmes on Malaria in Kenya

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Reviewer: Caroline Jones

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General
Overall this is a very timely article that contains interesting and original data. However, I think that the results section could do with some restructuring to help clarify the distinction between the underlying contextual factors, the content of the intervention and the process of intervention implementation on the impact of the programme.

In the abstract the authors state that the study explored: stakeholder’s perceptions of the role of PMVs, the value & feasibility of programme goals, the impact of the programme, factors influencing programme delivery and stakeholder’s recommendations. However in the body of the text the results are presented under very different headings (categories) and this is somewhat confusing and contributes to a lack of clarity in the presentation of the data (see analysis & results section below for further details).

Background
In the programme implementation section the authors have a sentence: Monitoring of trained PMRs aimed to provide supportive supervision for on-going education and problem solving. It is not clear from the surrounding sentences if the ‘community’ as a whole is supposed to undertake these tasks (as part of the public information strategies), or if the communities selected individuals to be responsible for these tasks, or if the support supervision was provided by the district. This needs clarification as effective support supervision has been shown to be one of the key factors in effective implementation.

Analysis & Results
The authors have used the policy analysis framework to help in the analysis of the results and to a certain extent, the results are presented in terms of the framework: Actors (who); Process (how); Content(what). However, a slight alteration to the sub-titles within the result section would probably help to clarify the distinction among these three factors. That is, the sub-headings in the results are currently labelled (i) to (v) with titles that suggest that (i) refers specifically to the context, (iv) refers specifically to the micro-process and (v) refers specifically to the content. The reader is, therefore, left to assume that (ii) & (iii) both refer to the actors. A simple relabeling of these subtitles would help the reader to understand how each section relates to the policy analysis framework.
On the other hand, I would suggest that the best approach would be to abandon trying to fit the results into the policy analysis framework (which is better suited to analysing the development of policy rather than its implementation) and concentrate on presenting the results under the headings that are presented in the abstract as the issues that the authors explored – i.e.: stakeholder’s perceptions of the role of PMVs, the value & feasibility of programme goals, the impact of the programme, factors influencing programme delivery and stakeholder’s recommendations.

One example of how trying to fit the results into the policy analysis framework is actually constraining the best understanding of the factors that are influencing the success of the programme (& how these factors fit together) is illustrated by the following:

The penultimate paragraph in the first sub-section of the results (pp12) does not seem to fit in with the nature of the other results discussed in this section. If the current structure were maintained then the first couple of sentences in particular paragraph which starts with…. “Arising from these typical interactions between PMR & there clients…” would fit better under the section discussing the client-PMR relationship. The second half of the paragraph then goes on to talk about the problems that the managers face as a results of the instability of shops & trained personnel. Under the current framework these data would best fit under the ‘process’ section. However, if the results were to be restructured, then the issue of the PMR-client interactions would fit under a section on stakeholder perceptions of the role of PMRs and the data on shifting shops would fit under a section on factors influencing programme delivery. If this structure were adopted, it would also allow for a clearer comparison of data collected from among the various stakeholders. One key factor for successful implementation of change is how closely the perceptions and goals of the various stakeholders are aligned. That is, how do the perceptions of the various stakeholders (users, PMRs, managers etc) on the role of PMRs vary (where do they vary and where do they concur)?

In addition, there currently appears to be some confusion as to which data should be included in each section. For example in section (iv) Micro-processes:….. While the first sentence in this section talks of processes, the rest of the paragraph is about programme impact with no mention of the process of implementation.

Using the topics listed in the abstract as the framework for analysis & results presentation would allow the authors to put in one place the data on the impact of the study in a more succinct manner and allow for a more clear distinction between the influence of underlying contextual factors, the factors relating to the content of the intervention and the factors relating to the process of intervention implementation on the final impact of the intervention. As the results are currently presented the distinction between underlying stakeholder perceptions of the role of PMVs and the intervention processes and impact are rather confused.

I would recommend that the authors restructure the results section along the lines suggested above. If such changes were made then I think this would result
in a more concise and informative article.