Author's response to reviews

Title: Inherent illnesses and attacks: an ethnographic study of Acute Respiratory Infections (ARIs) in children in Manhica, Southern Mozambique

Authors:

Lianne Straus (liannestraus@hotmail.com)
Khátia Munguambe (khatia.munguambe@manhica.net)
Quique Bassat (quique.bassat@cresib.cat)
Sonia Machevo (sonia.machevo@manhica.net)
Christopher Pell (c.l.pell@uva.nl)
Anna Roca (anna.roca@cresib.cat)
Robert Pool (robert.pool@cresib.cat)

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We agree with Dr Nigenda that our paper is unique in attempting to understand differences in lay and biomedical understandings in the context of formal biomedical health service utilisation, and with Professor Manderson, that the paper provides an important valuable contribution to the literature on the overlap of ARI and malaria and the importance of contextual information and local knowledge to use IMCI guidelines effectively”. We have found the additional comments useful in improving the papers and we have carried out all the suggested revisions and rewritten the Discussion section. We therefore feel that it is now ready for publication.

Specifically:

Dr Nigenda comments on the challenge of explaining why local populations continue to use biomedical care in spite of differences between lay and biomedical understandings of ARI, and wonders whether there is a logical and straightforward explanation. We do not think there is a clear and straightforward explanation, but in the revised discussion we show how a discourse on the “law of the hospital” contributes to this acceptance and, more importantly, how the syncretism of the local medical culture makes the combined use of medical resources acceptable on a practical level, even if they are ultimately based on incompatible assumptions.

Dr Nigenda also suggests that we bring all the theoretical assertions together in a single section and then use these to interpret the data. We found this a useful suggestion. We have rewritten the Discussion and included our theoretical perspective in the first part of the discussion. We then discuss our findings in relation to the theoretical approach.

We have added the description of the DSS and relevant references requested by prof. Manderson, and we have carried out substantial editing to make the text tighter and more readable.

We have revised the sentence on the FES, following prof. Manderson’s suggestion, as well as her other suggestions for corrections in the text.

As recommended by Prof. Manderson, we have edited the text extensively to improve the readability. We have also updated and formatted the reference list.