Reviewer's report

Title: Inherent illnesses and attacks: an ethnographic study of the role of hospital care-seeking for Acute Respiratory Infections (ARIs) in children in Manhica, Southern Mozambique

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Reviewer: Gustavo Nigenda

Reviewer's report:

The article deals with the way populations refer and understand Acute Respiratory Infections according to local language and the implications for the provision of health services. The article is quite interesting although it deals with a problem that many other researchers, mainly medical anthropologists, have worked before from a different theoretical perspective. My comments are:

Major Compulsory Revisions

a) It is important to strengthen the description of the social context of the population under study as well as the options that the population have to search for medical care particularly the supply of traditional medicine. It is not clear in the paper if all the population in the locality uses hospital services or only those under study. It would be good to know whether the findings of the study are also applicable in the rest of the population.

b) Based on the previous point, the article deserves a theoretical framework referring to the use of language (and its interpretation) as an expression of particular ways of understanding life, health and disease and the interaction with health providers in local communities. This is important for the interpretation of data.

c) Provide more explanation about the reasons to select the four localities that were chosen.

d) Authors should explain broader how the information from different sources was systematized and analyzed and how the constrasting (triangulation?) of information was carried out.

d) Authors should provide details of the translation process from local language to Portuguese to English and what type of process was carried out to guarantee that meanings from one language to the other were not modified.

e) At the beginning of the results section, information about the proportion of boys (68%) and girs (32%) in the population under study is presented but left without interpretation. Is this the proportion biased on purpose? Are more boys than girls taken to the hospital due to a cultural bias? How this is related to the understanding of Xifuva or other diseases in the community? (The theoretical framework would be useful in the interpretation of this information)

f) The fact that nurses seem to be engaged in non-biomedical concepts is a
demonstration that they are part of the community? Is this important in the provision of culturally-appropriate health services?

g) Besides, very little is said about the implications of the findings in the production of formal biomedical services. Implications are focused particularly to, "health education programmes addressing ARIs could focus on developing understanding by adopting local concepts as well". Understanding is only one stage in this process, the other one is acting according to populations' expectations but also being able to provide effective care. There is no reference to other issues that are important to the provision of services. For example, there are several experiences that have tried to integrate biomedical and community knowledge and practices with different degrees of success. According to authors, is this issue relevant in the community where the study was carried out?

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**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