Reviewer's report

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

Version: 2 Date: 26 January 2011

Reviewer: Lenore Manderson

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I believe that this paper provides a valuable contribution to the literature on the overlap of malaria and ARI, and the importance of contextual information and local knowledge to use IMCI guidelines effectively. The paper still requires some editing, and I do not propose to do this page by page, but there are a few points:

At first mention of DSS, I recommend that the authors explain this, minimally spelling out the acronym in brackets, and providing references.

Tighten writing would enhance readability.

The authors write “Several studies have used Focused Ethnographic Methods (FES) to investigate local perceptions of ARIs in children. In particular these studies have been based on a FES protocol designed for the WHO [31, 32].” In fact, the only FES for ARI was developed within WHO (by Gretel Pelto and Sandy Gove), and Gretel probably introduced the term FES in this context – the rest of us spoke of RAP at the same time. Suggest that these sentences be merged as follows: “Several studies have used Focused Ethnographic Methods (FES) to investigate local perceptions of ARIs in children, based on the protocol designed for the WHO [31, 32].”

On page 13, women were asked: And, before going to the hospital, what did you think that your child had? Should this not be worded: what did you think your child had? That is – delete ‘that’

Page 18: “We were asking caretakers to identify the ARI illness clearly indicated by the symptoms”. – replace with “We asked caretakers …. 

References: The reference list needs a lot of work – it seems to have been generated by ENDNOTE, without any effort to correct for different style generated by different sources. I assume the editor will identify this also.