Author's response to reviews

Title: Progress towards implementation of ACT malaria case-management in public health facilities in northern Sudan: a cluster-sample survey

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Version: 3 Date: 1 December 2011

Author's response to reviews:

Dear Editor,

Three out of the four reviewers were satisfied with our revision of the paper. Referee 2, Dr Kenneth Leonard raised the following comment:

Reviewer's report
Title: Progress towards implementation of ACT malaria case-management in public health facilities in northern Sudan: a cluster-sample survey
Version: 2 Date: 21 November 2011
Reviewer: Kenneth L Leonard
Reviewer's report:
I question the value of an M&E report in a peer reviewed journal and I do not agree that qualitative work is necessary to start answering the question of where the project could have done better and what lessons can be drawn from the project. The authors have chosen not to analyze the data by distance from a major city or by the organizational structure of facilities. This is, in my opinion, unfortunate.

The first task facing public health officials in such a setting is a technical one. Training is a necessary first step to changing protocols. However, training is well known to be inadequate. This paper reports that the training did a decent, but not perfect job. That is welcome news. However, since the reader does not really know why the training worked, there are few generalizable lessons that can be drawn from this paper.'
We agree with the reviewer about the importance of some analytical suggestions he makes, but we do not have several important details here such as the organizational structure of all health facilities we surveyed, the general population characteristics of clients such as their socio-economic status and perceptions about malaria treatment eg some people may prefer injections to oral therapy which may influence health worker practice, the evolution and detailed schedule and content of training which are all important to health worker practices and evaluating the effectiveness of training. Despite the data challenges, we believe the presentation of these results are important for the general public health audience as it describes the landscape of malaria case management in the Republic of the Sudan and will help people understand some of the potential areas of future research. We therefore do not think there is need for further fundamental changes to the manuscript.

On another development since we submitted this manuscript, the Sudan has been split into the The Republic of Southern Sudan and the Republic of Sudan, the latter being where our study was conducted. We have now made this change in the manuscript.

We look forward to you consideration.

Kind Regards
Abdisalan M Noor