Reviewer's report

Title: Illness meanings and experiences of Buruli ulcer for pre-ulcer and ulcer conditions in the Ga-West and South Municipalities of Ghana: A cross-sectional study

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Reviewer: Joan Muela Ribera

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Review of the article titled: Illness meanings and experiences of Buruli ulcer for pre-ulcer and ulcer conditions in the Ga-West and South Municipalities of Ghana: A cross-sectional study

1. The study addresses the important issue of the social burden of Buruli ulcer. It is a well written article; it is scientifically sound and nice to read. The argument is solid; the data is relevant; the EMIC methodology used in the study is well described and appropriate for the research goals; the text is well structured; the bibliography is pertinent and up to date; the limitations are clearly stated; the tables complement the text; and the title and abstract describes and summarizes adequately the article. The authors’ plea for social science research in NTDs is completely justified, and the article reinforces this plea.

2. My main concern is about the recommendations, basically focused on health education campaigns. For example, in pg 12, the high rate of anxiety is interesting, and this is something which should be taken into account in health messages – but more a counseling than an education approach. In the same page, the problem of transportation costs and other practical issues speaks in favour of decentralized care and approaches which solve these problems, rather than educational activities. It is clear that there are practical and economic reasons which deter patients from visiting health centres. Improved HSB can only partly be solved with awareness rising and education. Ideas like “young people from the national youth employment programme, employed as health workers, could assist with the care of young patients and other patients with disability, providing community-based social support that relieves the burden on the family” (pg 19) focus much better the real problems raised by the article. The data clearly show that there are many interventions which could go beyond health education (e.g. counseling, support groups, food aid, transport aid etc.). In fact, these data give strong support to already ongoing (pilot) interventions which are not mentioned in the paper.

3. The sentence “Because pre-ulcer conditions are normally painless and less debilitating than ulcers, the demands for care are minimal” is, to me, a little bit confusing as it seems to contradict the finding that patients with pre-ulcers feel more emotionally distressed...
4. This article makes an important contribution to Buruli ulcer research and control. My recommendation is to PUBLISH IT WITH DISCRETIONARY REVISIONS.

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**Level of interest:** An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

**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 interest