Reviewer's report

Title: Prevalence and trends of the diabetes epidemic in South Asia: a systematic review and meta-analysis

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Reviewer: Sutapa Agrawal

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Comments for the authors

1. The title of the paper suggests that the reader will become better informed about several areas - a) what is the prevalence for self reported diabetes; b) what is the prevalence for clinically diagnosed cases c) what are the modifiable and non-modifiable risk factors d) which risk factor is more dominant in various countries studied. Unfortunately these expectations are not realised. More effort is needed to make the paper specific to diabetes prevalence and associated risk factors.

Specific points

2. The diabetes epidemicity index is provided in the result section without any reference to figures or tables which makes this hard to follow. Moreover the index is provided only for Sri Lanka and other countries at various point of time. The importance of constructing an epidemicity index is not clear as nowhere the most recent data has been used for its construction. In India the most recent data on self reported diabetes prevalence at the national level can be found in National Family Health Survey, conducted during 2005-06. The author never mentioned about this important data set and some diabetes prevalence studies based on this nationally representative data set. I sum, the construction of diabetes epidemicity index are curiously confused and the figure does not help.

3. It is not clear from the title if the manuscript is about clinically diagnosed diabetes or self reported ones.

4. Risk factors such as family history, age, sex, sbp, dbp and BMI have only being dealt with in the result section. Other risk factors such as diet and physical activity which are the important modifiable factors for diabetes have been untouched upon by the authors. Also education and wealth has been completely left out.

5. The epidemiologic transition has affected high income countries as well as LMICs – the point of importance is that in LMICs the rate of increase is far in excess to that previously observed in high income countries – the nature of the problems is the same but solutions have to be found in a much shorter time frame and with far fewer resources.

6. page 12 second para “This so-called ‘epidemiological transition’ could be also
linked to the rapid industrialization occurring in the region as evidenced by the high prevalence of diabetes among urban residents.” What is the reference for this statement.

7. There is some repetition in the paper: “During recent years urbanization has risen unprecedentedly in the South Asian region [43].…” appear yet again (3rd time) on page 15.

8. The explanation for Table 3 is not provided.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.