Reviewer's report

Title: Rural residence and Limited Caretakers' Knowledge of Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses associated with poor Children's Nutritional Status: A Community-Based Cross-Sectional Survey Northern Uganda

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Reviewer: Pascal Bessong

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Mukunya and colleagues examined the association between caretakers' knowledge of community integrated management of childhood illnesses (IMCI) and nutritional status of young children in the Gulu area in northern Uganda. Gulu has been recently affected by armed conflicts. The authors observed that poor knowledge of IMCI by caretakers was associated with stunting and wasting in the studied population.

Major compulsory revisions

1. The methodology focused on the level of knowledge of caretakers on IMCI and correlation with wasting and stunting. It is indicated that children with chronic illness such as sickle cell or other chronic conditions were not included in the study. However, the feeding practices of the participants and other intermittent illnesses such as diarrhea that are potentially injurious to growth in young children are not accounted for or discussed. Examining only the level of understanding and implementation of IMCI and how these are related to growth in children is simplistic with a potentially wrong interpretation for the population which is recovering from prolonged civil strife as the authors have noted. Furthermore, stunting of 26% in Gulu was comparable to a previous report of stunting in the broader northern Uganda (24%), and it would be important to know the level of knowledge and practice of IMCI among caretakers in the broader northern Uganda. Is it possible that the observed poor knowledge of IMCI among the caretakers is probably due to the recent armed conflicts and has no causation on growth patterns?

2. Since anthropometric measurements were obtained at one time point only for each participant, the authors need to discuss the limitations of their findings in the light of this.

The authors should address these issues.

Minor essential revisions

1. The title could be rephrase to better read: Rural residence and caretakers' limited knowledge of...

2. Some minor editing is required, there are a few missing words in the text, e.g., in the abstract - ... recovering from prolonged ...
3. References are not consistent with BMC Public Health recommended style.

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.