Reviewer's report

**Title:** Malaria-related perceptions and practices of women with under-five children in rural Ethiopia

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 10 January 2009

**Reviewer:** Pamela Fergusson

**Reviewer's report:**

Review
Thank you for the opportunity to review this interesting paper. I suggest that all of the following are Major Compulsory Revisions

Malaria-related perceptions and practices of women with under-five children in rural Ethiopia

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
The aim of this study was clear and well defined, and also well justified in the study background.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
The methods need further description, referencing and justification. Why mixed methods? How did you calculate your sample size? What process did you use to randomly select kebeles? Why 18 /62 kebles? Why interview all of the women?
Can you explain in more detail how women were selected to participate in the FGDs. Were there any specific criteria you were looking for? Did you try to get representational diversity in your sample – for example younger and older mums, mums with only one or with more children? Any minority cultural groups represented?
How did you analyse your focus group discussion data?

3. Are the data sound?
The data appear to be sound, and interesting. A few of queries:
- The authors report data in means (for example mean age of mothers) Was the data normally distributed - or should the data be reported using medians?
- Were there any differences in knowledge or perceptions regarding malaria by age, or by level of education? You have a large sample size, and using cross tabs you might be able to give a clearer idea of who especially needs to be targeted – (younger mums? Mums with less education? etc)
- On page 8 you mention that malaria was the main childhood health problem frequently reported. What other health problems were reported? Diarrhoea? ARIs? Malnutrition?
- On page 18 you state that mothers had a low level of education ( <15% ). What does this mean?
Qualitative data can be used to cross check and further explore findings from quantitative research. This relationship between quantitative and qualitative data could have been made clearer.

On page 11 you state that ‘the majority’ of women in the FGs associated malaria with mosquitoes. In qualitative data it is not usually acceptable to state ‘majority’ as this implies statistical analysis. You might say ‘most’.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
   Overall this was fine.
   It might be useful to include some of the characteristic data from the mothers in a table: age, education, incidence of malaria etc.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
   The discussion was well written and explored the issues well with reference to the literature. Again – it would have been useful to more clearly compare the data obtained using qualitative and qualitative methods – and explore any discrepancies with reference to the literature.
   The conclusions need to be made more forceful- with clear recommendations of exactly what should be prioritised in health education and disease prevention efforts.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
   This needs further development.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
   This could also have been more clearly conveyed.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
   This was clear.

9. Is the writing acceptable?
   Yes- the writing was fine. A few specific points below:
   Page 6: Muslim denomination. I believe this is inaccurate. Muslim is not a denomination, but is the word to describe followers of Islam. You might more accurately state that the ‘population was primarily Muslim’. By the way – what percentage were Muslim?

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published
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'