Reviewer's report

Title: Linking international clinical research with stateless populations to justice in global health

Version: 2 Date: 5 March 2014

Reviewer: Bege Dauda

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I draw the authors attention to these minor essential revisions. I have also attached a doc copy of the comments

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
The authors start by describing the key concepts in research for health justice framework and then access how justice in global health can be achieved in research involving stateless populations. The research focus and question are well defined and clearly spelled out

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
The authors referred the reader to a previously published article that fully describes the methods. I think it would be equally good if they can still provide some brief outlook of the method particularly the direct observation study. This will give the reader some idea of what they have done without necessarily compelling the reader to refer to the previous article. Asides this simple observation the methods are well described

3. Are the data sound?
The interview data are sound. The tone of the reported interviews indicate that interviews were carefully translated and transcribed verbatim

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
I suggest the authors should refer to the instructions for submitting research article and adhere to the delineated standards. For example the Case study description by the authors should come under the general heading “methods” Also the authors seems to be describing the study setting not exactly the case study. I would rather have the subheading of the section as “Study Setting” rather than “Case study” and should be under the heading “Methods”
Furthermore, make it clear in the proceeding part where the results begin as well as the discussion

I feel the section “Obligations to stateless research populations” under the main heading EXTENDING THE ‘RESEARCH FOR HEALTH JUSTICE’ FRAMEWORK is too detailed instead of focusing straight on the point of discussion. For instance the first paragraph:
The border population is not homogenous. Refugees are primarily Karen and physically situated in Thailand in camps like Mae La. They may stay in these camps for a few months to decades. The Thai government considers these refugees to be under its authority [20]. Migrants live on either side of the border. Those in Myanmar may routinely cross into Thailand for work or to access health care at an SMRU clinic. Migrants are more mobile than the refugees based in the camps. Some of those entering Thailand for work are registered migrants with work permits. In 2004, there were 610,106 registered migrants and 1.3 million illegal migrants [20]. A proportion of the border population are effectively permanent residents of Thailand while others regularly cross the border.

I think this can be considered under the “study setting” or “case study” on the methods section so as to allow the section to focus on the said heading.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?

There is no clear distinction of discussion from results sections. Authors present results and discussion at the same time. I think they can consider presenting the results and create a section for discussion separately so as to give the reader some ease in following the different sections of the article. However the conclusion is well balanced as it highlights the various findings in the study and gives some general perspectives and recommendations.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?

Authors did not indicate limitations of the work. However, I find the data and the data collection methods used in the study (interviews and observation) very plausible.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?

Yes authors have referred to their previous work that the present manuscript is build upon.

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

Yes,

9. Is the writing acceptable?

The writing style is well acceptable and does not require language or grammatical review. My main concern on the paper is the arrangements of various sections of the manuscript to conform to the standards of the journal for research article submission.

Level of interest: An article of importance 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 interests