Reviewer's report

Title: The use of mobile phones as a data collection tool: A report from a household survey in South Africa

Version: 2 Date: 23 September 2009

Reviewer: Robert A Logan

Reviewer's report:

I recommend the publication of this manuscript.

The manuscript is well-written and the topic is relevant to the readers of BMC Medical Informatics and Decision Making.

The intent and implementation of the study are straightforward and the findings are interpreted appropriately.

The study provides modest evidence that mobile phones might be used for consumer health informatics/public health-related survey research and data collection. The setting is imaginative and important as a diffusion model for other low and middle income nations -- and perhaps elsewhere.

The authors have made significant revisions to the manuscript’s literature review, explanation of methods, interpretation of findings, and conclusion sections.

I think the manuscript would be more useful if the authors provided some brief suggestions for future research. I believe a pioneering study presents an opportunity to provide suggestions about how to advance the literature in the field as well as evaluate the relative advantages of a technology’s implementation. As a result, I hoped the authors might address how future researchers might conceptually frame and implement more comprehensive, comparative research to assess how mobile phones are a viable (or superior) method of data collection for consumer health informatics/public health survey research within middle, or low income nations.

Also, I wish the authors better addressed how the use of mobile phones for data collection may contribute to the complex reliability and validity issues inherent in field, survey research data collection within a developing nation. While the current version of the paper introduces this topic (especially in terms of double data entry, data fabrication, and employe monitoring), I hoped to read more about how the use of mobile phones might or might not address other well-established data validity and reliability issues that include: household access, selecting a population sample that is highly similar to overall population characteristics, random sampling of domiciles (dwellings, or a unit of analysis), clustered sampling to reflect population statistics, ensuring the respondent is an adult and only one person is a respondent, question design and bias, readability, and providing reliability and validity checks within an instrument.
I should note that the copy of the manuscript I received did not contain the four figures or inserts that the authors intended to provide within the narrative. Hence, I cannot critique the accuracy or pertinence of these inserts.

On the other hand, I applaud the authors for their good faith effort to respond to most of the suggestions made by previous reviewers. Since the authors carefully and satisfactorily addressed the majority of my earlier comments, it is appropriately reciprocal to endorse the revised version for publication without further revisions or changes.

**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.