Reviewer’s report

Title: Bypassing primary health care facilities: Perceived and experienced quality of care offered to sick children in rural Tanzania

Version: 1 Date: 8 September 2011

Reviewer: Najibullah Safi

Reviewer’s report:

1. Major Compulsory Revisions
a. Study design and data collection: the study design and methods for data collection need to be described in details and separate from each other.
b. Please provide the details for sample size calculation, how you come-up with a sample size of 560 caretakers for the quantitative survey
c. Please compare the characteristic of those who bypass the primary health care facilities with those who did not
d. Conclusion and policy implication:
   This is understood that various services and facilities are provided at different levels of care, e.g. the availability of diagnostic facilities for malaria could not be an issue related to quality of care at primary health care facility as these facilities are not suppose to provide such services. Other issues such as availability of medicines and qualified human resource for health could be linked with quality of care. The study was aimed to assess the frequency of bypass, factors influencing bypass and explore the experiences of care takers seeking care for their under-five children at such facilities. This study was not aimed to assess the quality of care at the primary health care facilities. Therefore, the authors should link the conclusion and policy implication with study findings/results and objectives. For instance; one of the policy implications could be to upgrade primary health care facilities and add diagnostic services for malaria at the primary care level. In addition, equity may not be an issue, as all primary health care facilities may provide the same services; better services in District Hospital refer to different function and scope of the facility rather than to equity.

2. Minor Essential Revisions
a. Quantitative data collection:
   ü “Some children with a provisional diagnosis of malaria were also included even if the subsequent result of malaria rapid test was negative”. The study should have clear inclusion and exclusion criteria for the study subjects and need to be followed accordingly. Why some patients with provisional malaria diagnosis were included in the study and others with the same diagnosis were not included.
   ü “Caretakers of the severely ill children who died before the interviews were conducted were not included”. Please mention the number of such cases.
Please list the variables which were included in the questionnaire for both the quantitative and qualitative components.

Qualitative data collection:

Why the caretakers of only severely ill child were selected for in-depth interviews? Why not the caretakers of all children admitted to the hospital?

Data analysis

“The variables selected for the multivariate model were either significant (p-value < 0.05) in the bivariate analysis or shown to be significant in previously published studies” please add the references for such studies published previously.

Discussion:

“The above two investigations are commonly unavailable at most primary care facilities in Tanzania”. Please add the reference.

Frequent repetition of the findings with inadequate comparison with findings from other studies conducted in Tanzania, region and other part of the world. The authors are requested to compare their finding with other studies conducted on the same subject instead of repeating their results.

Please describe the measure taken to minimize the effects of study limitation on result/findings.

Table 1. Please remove the word background from the title.

3. Discretionary Revisions

a. “abstract” and “background” replace the following:

Qualitative findings to in-depth interviews

30 were interviewed qualitatively to 30 in-depth interviews were conducted

Investigation to diagnostic

Health intervention to health services

b. Multiple ‘lack’ and reported quality of care at primary care facilities

Please replace “lack of investigation” to “lack of diagnostic facilities”

c. Lack of investigation:

Please replace “… interviewed qualitatively” to “in-depth interviews”

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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