Author's response to reviews

Title: Addressing maternal healthcare through demand side financial incentives: experience of Janani Suraksha Yojana Program in India

Authors:

Saji S Gopalan (sajisaraswathyg@gmail.com)
Varatharajan D (sajisaraswathyg@yahoo.com)

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Addressing maternal healthcare through demand side financial incentives: experience of Janani Suraksha Yojana Program in India

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Authors’ response

Reviewer 1

The authors should be congratulated on accomplishing a challenging evaluation research project with rigorous research methodology in a developing country context. I have some comments that need to be addressed before it can be accepted.

1. p.8, Results: Please start the results section with a sentence stating the estimated annual total deliveries in Orissa pre JSY, and during the first middle and last year of the study period. Then state the baseline population-based rates of institutional deliveries, ANC and PNC in Orissa. (These are shown in Table 1. They should be stated here to provide context for the results stated subsequently.

Authors’ response: we have incorporated this information in the first paragraph of the results section (page 8).

2. The authors have not touched upon a very important aspect of DSF in the Discussion section. A major program weakness is the opportunity for induction of greater magnitude of illegal payments or contributions (expected and collected) from the mothers by the various levels of service providers, from the ASHAs to the doctors conducting deliveries under JSY. It appears these functionaries factored in the increased access to finances by the women and felt entitled to a share of the new support! This impact appears to be at least as significant and impact as the induction of institutional deliveries, ANC and PNC. Impact on OOP is a key study question.

Authors’ response: This information is already there on page 12, paragraph 1. We have mentioned about informal payments, demanded by the providers from the mothers.

3. I would like to see in the Results section a quasi quantitative summarization of the FGD comments from mothers, how many FGDs turned up with this allusion. Did any participant at those FGDs refute that this happened to themselves, some summary to assess how widespread the increased OOP burden is following JSY. While it may be difficult to address at the ground level, the fact that it is a major weakness of the program should be articulated. Unless articulated, remedies to minimize this problem are unlikely to be initiated. Hence it is of policy significance that the matter be elaborated upon further and potential remedies discussed in the discussion section.

Authors’ response: We have now mentioned on how many FGDs turned up with particular information. We did not have any instance of women refuting any particular instance.
Reviewer 1

1. Title of the study: Appropriate.
2. Abstract: Abstract summarizes the manuscript completely.
3. Restriction of decimal uniformly to either first place was followed which allows for better comprehension.
4. Background information was presented to clarify the purpose of the study.
5. Results relevant to the objectives were presented.
6. In the result section 95% CI has to be included wherever applicable
   
   Authors’ response: It was purely a qualitative study and therefore there was no scope for statistical analysis and incorporate 95% CI.

7. The word “and” can be removed from the sentence ‘the incentive induced fresh Out of pocket spending’ or can be modified as per authors view in the result paragraph.
   
   Authors’ response: This sentence is restructured now on page 2, last paragraph

8. The word “present study” in the place of “this article” will sound better in the last para of introduction.
   
   Authors’ response: This word change has been done on page 5, paragraph 1.

9. To add the word low performing state (LPS) to the first sentence in the first para of materials and method section, as cash assistance is available for only 2 births in HPS. Similarly JSY addresses SC and ST mothers in HPS in addition to BPL mothers and hence last sentence of first para also requires correction.
   
   Authors’ response: These two comments are incorporated on page 5, last paragraph.

10. To expand GoI to Government of India when used for the first time to allow better comprehension for readers outside India.
    
    Authors’ response: GoI has been expanded on page 5, last paragraph

11. For better flow, sampling strategy should be explained before detailing study setting, as selection of state was included in the first stage of sampling.
    
    Authors’ response: We have followed the style of the journal to present the Methods section. Further, the usual pattern of this kind of scientific writing is to describe the study setting followed by the sampling.

12. Explanation and Revision of sentences is required to bring further clarity in the sampling section. Justification for selecting only three districts and half of rural and urban blocks if possible will be appreciated.
    
    Authors’ response: Sampling section has been elaborated further on page 6, paragraph 2

13. Details of split up of number of FGDs among JSY beneficiaries and ASHA if provided will be appreciated (though provided in table 1). As FGDs are done on homogenous group, the sentence has to be reframed so that it comes out clear that FGDs on ASHAs and JSY beneficiaries were conducted separately.
    
    Authors’ response: This information on FGDs are now split up among ASHAs and mothers (page 7, paragraph 2)
14. Discussions with ASHAs provided information rather than sought information in the FGD section. Emerging themes instead of emerging trends (though trends are also acceptable) in the key informant interview section.
   **Authors’ response:** This word change has been incorporated on page 7, paragraph 3.

15. Operational definition for below poverty line if mentioned will be appreciated. It appears from the table 2 that data was extracted for the whole state of Orissa from HMIS so the same has to be explained clearly in the methods section otherwise there is tendency for the readers to relate the extracted data for the selected districts.
   **Authors’ response:** This information is now given on page 6, paragraph 1.

16. The word time to be replaced with childbirth or pregnancy in appropriate places.
   **Authors’ response:** This has been addressed wherever appropriate.

17. Justification for comparing OOPs for JSY supported and JSY non supported institutional deliveries as both are temporally different and inflation and recall bias has to be accounted. The word confounding has to be replaced with various in the last line of discussion part.
   **Authors’ response:** This recall bias has been added to the ‘strengths and limitations of the study” on page 18.