Reviewer's report

Title: Mapping of multiple criteria for priority setting of health interventions: an aid for decision makers

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Reviewer: Lydia Kapiriri

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Review of manuscript: Mapping of multiple criteria for priority setting of health interventions: an aid for decision makers

Overview

This is a very interesting and innovative paper that attempts to link priority setting criteria to the WHO health systems frameworks.

Major Revisions:

Methods:

While I agree with the authors that there is a growing body of literature on criteria for priority setting; since the focus of this paper is on criteria; it would be great if the authors presented the list of criteria from which they derived the criteria used in their framework. The reason for this is 2 fold;

1) The references provided focused on criteria for different priority setting issues so we cannot assume that all these criteria were applicable in this framework. It would be useful to the reader if all criteria were presented; and then identify the criteria they chose to include in the framework, and rationale for not selecting some criteria which may have been potentially useful. I assume there are more relevant criteria to the framework than were included; but for simplifying the framework, they were not all included. For example see below.

2) Some criteria that could have been used in the frame work e.g. age was left out, it is not clear how the selection of the criteria for each aspect were selected.

Results:

Pg 5, Para 2: the authors state that “ Many criteria for Ps have been described in detail elsewhere, and their classification in our framework is “unambiguous”..I do agree with the authors but wonder whether in so doing the authors assume that all readers will have prior understanding of the literature on criteria for priority setting and its classification.

In the second line; “...Here we present all criteria but only discuss those that are in- or excluded or defined in comparison to ps criteria put forward elsewhere..”

- I find this sentence to be unclear.

o First, where is all the criteria presented? Is it in a table, if so which one? Did I miss it?
Second, if you only discuss criteria that are in- or excluded (would this not be all the criteria?)

For an audience that is not familiar with ps literature; an overview of the criteria would be relevant. Such an overview would provide the reader with background and contextual understanding of what is out there and clarity of which criteria you deemed relevant to the framework. This if supplemented with an explanation of why you selected the criteria that you selected; would be useful.

Paragraph 2: While the author provided ample explanation for equity, the explanation for the other criteria is very minimal. For better understanding, the authors could expound on the categories that they promise in the first paragraph of their results, to expound on since this is criteria contained in their framework.

- This paragraph is difficult to understand. While the explanation of the ‘health level’ category was clear- with the category and the criteria; the related criteria for the ‘responsiveness’ and ‘social and financial protection’ is very sketchy and unclear. It is left to the reader to identify the criteria, which are not that obvious since what is identified—in the first case are simply the components of “responsiveness”
- Can the authors present this section consistently providing the categories, explain what they are; present the criteria and explain what it is

Minor revisions
Additional comments:
Pg.5 Paragraph 3: This category relates to level of health. It is not clear what the individual in the criterion “individual effectiveness” refers to.
Pg. 6 Par.1; The last sentence could be shortened---and that work just referenced.
Pg. 7 Par. 1: What is meant by “small burden”? Thought the burden of disease included the number of people affected—in this paragraph the two are presented separately. So when in the second sentence the authors refer to decision makers targeting a small burden: is this in terms of disease burden or number of people or both?

Apart from the fact that the criteria is not comprehensive; are there other limitations related to the framework e.g. is there a limitation, from the systems perspective of focusing on the WHO frameworks as basis for the development of the criteria?

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 co-authored a paper with the authors a few years ago