Reviewer’s report

Title: Comparison of medicine availability measurements at health facilities: evidence from Service Provision Assessment surveys in five sub-Saharan African countries

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Reviewer: Anita Kotwani

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Comparison of medicine availability measurements at health facilities: evidence from Service Provision Assessment surveys in five sub-Saharan African countries

General
This paper describes that the availability estimate will be different based on different approaches and definition used for availability of medicines. A fact which is known but the authors have given the estimates of variation in availability measured mainly by two definitions.
I would like to suggest a few major compulsory revisions in the paper.

Major compulsory revisions

Background
1. Authors mentioned in the first paragraph that surveys focusing on affordability of medicines tend to follow standardized methodology and have given the reference of a standardized methodology, ‘Measuring medicine prices, availability, affordability and price components’. This methodology is a standardized methodology to measure medicine prices, availability and affordability of a basket of essential medicines. Based on the results of medicines’ prices and availability in a region, affordability is calculated. For measuring medicine availability a standardized methodology is needed and verification of the medicine is required. However, due to some constraints or rapid measurement a different approach may be used as the authors have used. Therefore, in the first paragraph, authors should clarify that why in Service provision Surveys a particular definition of medicine availability is used.

Methods
1. Selection criteria for 32 medicines surveyed should be mentioned.
2. Were these 32 medicines specified for strength and dosage form or any strength or dosage form of medicine present was taken as available?
3. Why for few medicines the trade or brand name mentioned in the list?
4. Are these 32 medicines always surveyed and looked for expiration dates or were done for this study?
5. If done for this study, was this study planned before 2006 (Tanzania SPA, 2006)?

6. For stock-out study, information was sought from the in-charge or it was verified from the registers as well?

Discussion

Paragraph 3 needs to be written clarifying that what exactly authors want to convey. It appears that verifying the expiring dates of all medicines will require minimal additional cost. Therefore, this definition should be used for measuring medicine availability.

Minor revision

Discussion

1. Second paragraph, last line, ‘and effective use of medicines…’ instead of effective better to use rational use of medicines

Conclusions

2. Better to specify the large scale health facility assessment.

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests