Reviewer's report

Title: Practicalities and challenges in re-orienting the health system in Zambia for treating chronic conditions.

Version: 1 Date: 25 March 2014

Reviewer: Krishna REGMI

Reviewer's report:

• Abstract (background) – you have mentioned that ‘… two separate studies were conducted....’ What does that mean? Does that mean two methods for data collection?
• You have used the term ‘decentralisation’ but failed to discuss the meaning of it as this is not an easy term in policy context therefore authors have to define this first within the context of their study. Background section appears rather descriptive and patchy - therefore I would suggest to add some specific facts and figures that can be added to support your arguments. Again, you have often used the word ‘demand’ – but the meaning is not quite clear to me. Please revisit this section to make better sense and improve clarity
• how your 2009 study linked to this one? Needs to make an explicit. You mentioned d that: 'That study helped to identify important components of national HIV programmes....' What were the components? please provide some to make your readers informed. Again you pointed out that you have used ‘....a range of methods’ but you failed to discuss why did you use such methods – needs some justification. The research included ‘in-depth case studies of three CHBC ...’ but I could not see any strong justifications and at the same time because you didn’t employ any strong criteria – that might bring some biases (information) - please revisit this part to make your case strong. Again, you mentioned that in each programme, you did ‘semi-structured interviews with staff members and external stakeholders (such as local clinic staff), as well as service observations, focus group discussions with caregivers and structured interviews with patients and their relatives’ but you did not provide any justifications, for example, why these methods would be an ideal (appropriate) in this case? Sorry, how did you transcribe data? Did you use any process of translation and transliteration? Sorry, why did you do additional interview with 19 key informants? There was no nothing mentioned about the aspects of data saturation theory!
• Results and discussion sections – presented satisfactorily.
• Overall: This paper is methodologically very weak! Second, I did not get quite clear picture about the justification/rationale of this paper.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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.