Author's response to reviews

Title: Quality use of medicines within universal health coverage: challenges and opportunities

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Editorial Office
BMC Health Services Research

Subject: Revision of MS: 4981047451085637

Dear Editors:

We are submitting the revised manuscript of our contribution now entitled “Quality Use of Medicines Within Universal Health Coverage: Challenges and Opportunities”, for potential publication in the Debate section of BMC Health Services Research. We greatly appreciate the two reviewers’ positive feedback and have responded to each of their comments, as detailed below. We believe our contribution has been further improved in the process.

As mentioned earlier, and confirmed by the reviewers, our contribution highlights a crucial, very timely, global concern: Why and how should countries on the path to universal health coverage (UHC) consider medicines access, affordability, and use? We highlight system opportunities for answering this question.

We believe that our proposed Debate is of great relevance to readers of BMC Health Services Research because of the current global focus on UHC of governments, health care and financing decision makers, populations, development agencies and donors, the lack of explicit consideration of medicines in UHC discussions, and the key clinical quality, public health safety, and economic roles medicines play for patients, physicians and other care providers, and policy makers in systems.

Thank you for considering our contribution. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Anita K. Wagner, PharmD, MPH, DrPH
Associate Professor

**Response (in italics) to Reviewers’ Comments**

**Reviewer 1 (Shanthi Mendis)**

Reviewer's report:
The paper addresses an important problem of interest to biomedical audience. The paper focuses attention on the importance of access to good quality affordable medicines to safeguard health. Authors use sound reasoning and argumentation to make the case that Universal Health Coverage Schemes provide opportunities to countries to develop/revise medicine policies. Paper concludes identifying the key challenges that health systems will face in moving towards evidence informed medicine coverage policies.

Level of interest:
An article of importance in its field

*We thank Dr. Mendis for the positive feedback on our manuscript. Although Dr. Mendis did not ask for it, in response to the reviewer’s description of our commentary, we changed the title to “Medicines in Health Systems Working Toward Universal Health Coverage: Challenges and Opportunities”.*

**Reviewer 2 (Chulaporn Limwattananon)**

Reviewer's report:

- **Major Compulsory Revisions**
  1. In the text, the summary section should be revised by synthesizing innovative ideas/concepts that the authors have addressed in the paper about roles of the UHC scheme, instead of repeating general issues described by existing statements.

*We appreciate Dr. Limwattananon’s suggestion. In response, we have reworded the Summary to” LMIC working toward UHC have enormous potential to improve health. To succeed, they need to adopt an explicit system focus on sound, evidence-informed medicines policies. We highlight four key competing medicines system objectives and outline necessary information and policy options to achieve those. “*

- **Minor Essential Revisions**
  2. Under the ‘More Patient Centered Systems’ section, a few sentences should be added to provide some examples of the following issues:
- Transparency and involvement of civil societies for the decision making process for medicine coverage (e.g., Cancer Drug Fund of NHS, UK)

*We are grateful for this comment. In response, we have added to the section “More Patient Centered Systems” the following phrase and reference: “Transparency in decision making about medicines coverage, and understanding preferences of and engaging with civil society in benefit discussions, will be key to maintaining public trust.”*

To remain within the limit of 30 references, we deleted the previous reference#20 to cancer population data (International Agency for Research on Cancer. Cancer Mondial [Cited 01 June 2013]. Available from: http://www-dep.iarc.fr.)

Level of interest:
An article of importance in its field

Independent from the reviewers’ comments, we also slightly changed the text in the figure.