Reviewer's report

Title: Patients’ Dissatisfaction with the Public and Private Laboratory Services in Tanzania

Version: 2 Date: 29 February 2008

Reviewer: Wilson Pace

Reviewer's report:

Major/mandatory revisions or responses-

Information concerning response rate: While the authors have responded that the study had a 100% response rate it has not be included in the body of the paper. The response rate should be included in the Methods section of the paper so it is available for readers.

Number of subjects per site: The body of the paper still indicates that 12 people were interviewed at each of 24 sites this would give a sample size of 288 but there are 295 people in the sample. Thus, 13 people or more must have been interviewed at some locations. The range of interviews per location should be specified along with the response rate so that readers can evaluate any potential effects from nesting of this sample. Also, table 1 indicates a fair degree of variability in individuals answering selected questions- from 295 to 224 the reason(s) for missing data should be included in the Methods section as well.

Rationale for sampling approach and sample size: The resultant sample size between public and private laboratories is highly skewed- even though this appears to be the primary analytical framework- why a block randomization method was not employed to create the study sample should be explained given the analytical framework.

The small sample size- particularly for public laboratories would seem to lead to a wide estimate of variance. Justification in the form of a statement concerning the power of the study to detect meaningful differences - should be included in the methods section. At the population level a sample size of 300 gives a roughly +/- 6% estimate while the 70 people sampled from public laboratories results in an approx. +/- 12% estimate. How this may have affected the results interpretation should be mentioned in a limitations section as well as some mention made in the Methods section.

Satisfaction and efficiency: The results section concerns involving satisfaction levels (is 70-85% satisfaction good or bad?) had not been addressed in the body of the paper. Given that many satisfaction surveys tend to have ceiling effects problems with overall satisfaction with health providers/services being in the 90%+ range ratings in the 15-25%+ dissatisfaction levels are actually quite high. This is the issue that was asked to be addressed in the discussion section but no new comments concerning this could be found.
The statement concerning greater efficiency of public laboratories has not been changed in the body of the manuscript and the response letter does not address this issue.

Minor Revisions

Anchors- dealt with in response letter

Results notification- not dealt with in the response letter or in the body of the manuscript

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests