Reviewer's report

Title: Lack of effective communication between communities and hospitals in Uganda: a qualitative exploration of missing links

Version: 1 Date: 13 July 2009

Reviewer: Godfrey Mubyazi

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GENERAL REMARK
This is an article of great importance in the field and is worthwhile for international readership. I recommend the MS to be considered subject to Minor Essential Revisions.

• Questions posed by the authors well understood? ..........YES, but some suggestions
• Are the methods appropriate and well described.............Mainly YES, but some suggestions
• Do the MS adhere to the relevant standards of reporting data deposition?.......YES
• Are the discussions and Conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by data?........YES
• Are the limitations of the work clearly stated?...............................................YES
• Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?.........................................................YES
• Do the article and abstract accurately convey what has been found.............YES
• Is the writing acceptable?.................................................................YES

SPECIFIC COMMENTS
Abstract: Generally well written and reflecting most of the issues presented in the main text and is very interesting to read. However,
- In the 1st paragraph, I would have written the 2nd sentence like that.. ‘Their views are important because they reflect the perspectives of the general public regarding quality of hospital services rendered’.
- The objective of the study should have been stated separately as was done for the background, methods, results and conclusions sections to enable the readers see it more clearly.
- The methods section is fine, but how were the KIIs and FGD participants selected was not indicated explicitly.

Introduction – very well written

Methods – There are a few issues to be clarified to improve it:

(i) Study area and study population – I would have stated ‘Study areas and population’

(ii) Sampling criteria – I can see that a purposeful and some sort of convenient sampling strategy was used in selecting the hospitals and HUMC members, but the authors have not made it so clear, though have given very good clarification about who was selected and why in the subsequent sections (under Data Collection).

(iii) There are a few typos errors on such words as focussed which should be changed to focused instead, e.g. on pg 8 line 9, and pg 9 line 5.

(iv) On pg 9, I would have changed the 1st sentence as ‘The number of the participants per each FGD ranged between 8 and 12 as recommended (then putting a reference e.g. Smith & Morrow 1996; Dawson et al., 1993: see full reference in the article I published with my colleagues in the Journal of Public Health, 2007).

(v) The 2nd sentence on pg 9 in the 2nd para that explain about the usefulness of FGDs, should be redundant, i.e. the sentence stating, ‘Through FGDs, researchers gain....’.

Ethical Clearance

The authors say that verbal and individual consent was obtained from the study participants, but have not explained why the written informed consent was not sought or accepted by the individuals approached. Is it due to the danger that it would cause the potential participants develop a feeling of incofidentiality of the information they give to the researchers and therefore decide to incline against participation? If so, please let the readers know, since from my experience in Tanzania, that actually happens.

Results

- In the 2nd para, particularly the 2nd sentence, something needs to be done to improve the sentence, e.g. ‘.......the HUMCs never received views from the community nor gave back to communities any feedback.....’. I think the word back should be deleted.

- Some of the quoted statements have to be modified, either by correcting some sentences or expressing them in normal texts. For instance, on pg12, the long quoted statement seems to be based on the expressions given by a group of men, and is very interesting. But the use of such personality words as I e.g. in sentence number 3, makes the statement sound as if it was expressed by one person. I suggest the sentence to read as follows: That one we know instead of That one I know.
-On pg 14, in the 2nd sentence, the word may gave should be changed to give.

-On pg19, correction is needed in the 2nd sentence by inserting the word to between the word would go and the radio i.e. should sound like....would go to the radio...

-On pg20 in the quoted statement, written in italics, I think the word documents should be changed to certifies.

-On pg21, line 10, typos error again for the word focussed, that should change to focused.