Reviewer’s report

Title: Are "Village Doctors" in Bangladesh a curse or a blessing?

Version: 1 Date: 6 December 2009

Reviewer: M A Hamid Salim

Reviewer’s report:

This paper is well written with clearly defined objectives. The methodology is appropriate and data presented looks quite comprehensive. The discussions in the paper based on the survey findings and its conclusion is clearly supported by the data presented.

The importance of village doctors in the absence of qualified graduate (MBBS) doctors to ensure health care services to the rural population in Bangladesh is well demonstrated. There are several ethical concerns to involve these village doctors to provide health services. It might be interesting to discuss what proportion of their prescriptions are inline with the standard practice and also the importance of regulatory mechanism.

Few other concerns are:

1. It is demonstrated that the village doctors are the most preferred health care providers because of their accessibility and as well as quality of services provided by the village doctors- 73% of the patients responded that they were received quality healthcare from the village doctors. It is important to explore how community perceived quality for the services they received from the village doctors.

2. The survey conducted in Chakaria seems during the seasonal flu as such exacerbated with the prevalence of illness. As a result the number of physician (600 physicians) needed to ensure health care in Chakaria looks very high-need to be revised. It might be interesting to demonstrate how many qualified doctors and how many village doctors are currently practicing in Chakaria.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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