Reviewer's report

Title: Effects of Mothers' Socio-Economic Status on the Management of febrile conditions in their under five children in a Resource Limited Setting.

Version: 3 Date: 15 July 2005

Reviewer: James Tumwine

Reviewer's report:

General
1. The authors attempted to measure the effect of socioeconomic status of mothers on the management of febrile illness of children below the age of five years. Although the question is not new there are not very many studies on the subject based in Nigeria.
2. The methods used fell short of expectations. One would have thought that a community based study would have yielded more meaningful results since the population using the hospital is not likely to be representative of the community especially with regard to socioeconomic well being. In a sense this is a major shortcoming of this study. It is not clear what the authors mean by a 'febrile condition.' Where were these children recruited within the hospital? Is there a special unit or ward or clinic where children with acute illness, such as fever, present? Did you recruit mothers of children admitted to hospital or those attending the outpatient department of the hospital? Did you obtain any consent from the mothers? Was it written or verbal and what explanations did you give to the mothers? This section would constitute compulsory revision before a decision is made on publication.
3. The inclusion criteria are not clear? Whom were you including in the study? Was it the mothers (respondents) or their children? If a mother came with two children with fever what did you do? If the child was accompanied by an auntie, caretaker or another woman other than the mother, how did you handle the situation? Did you exclude any of these caretakers? This section would constitute compulsory revision before a decision is made on publication.

4. Who carried out the interviews and filled in the questionnaires? In what language(s), were the interviews conducted? Was any translation from one language into another needed? What was the process? What variables were used to assess socioeconomic status? Did you use only occupation, education and income? Have the authors heard of principle Component analysis? Did you use this? This section would constitute compulsory revision before a decision is made on publication.

5. The presentation of data needs some extra work. For example what variables were studied. In table one we are only give a glimpse of age, formal education level, family structured, occupation and income. Were any other variable looked at? For example the nature of the dwelling house (roof, wall, floor)? It is not clear what variables were entered into the model and for what purpose? What criterion was used? Was any bi-variate analysis made? Where are the results? It is possible that some of the results (such as income is not normally distributed! In which case inter-quartile ranges would be preferred. It is not clear what the significant (T) in table 3 refers to? Is students’ t test or what? Please explain. So did you use the student’s test when occupation was a categorized variable? Explain. The similar question applies to table 4. This section would constitute compulsory revision before a decision is made on publication.

6. The discussion : Unfortunately the discussion has been mixed with the results. Consequently, this has given a mixture of unclear results and messages. I suggest that the authors should present the detailed results separate from the discussion. The discussion should simply state the important findings and discuss whether these are expected or surprising and give reasons why? Are the
results similar to what has been found elsewhere. For example the Demographic Health surveys have addressed this question in several sub Saharan countries including Nigeria. Why have the authors not compared their results with those of these surveys? Why is no reference made to the Demographic Health surveys? The conclusion on the girl child ins really being made without strong reason or evidence. This section would constitute compulsory revision before a decision is made on publication.

The abstract do not accurately reflect what has been found. The issues here are education level and income and really not socioeconomic status. The writing is full of typing and grammatical errors that need to be addressed. For example: These are discretionary revisions. I have indicated these to you in a word document with track changes function.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Reject because scientifically unsound

Level of interest: An article of insufficient interest to warrant publication in a scientific/medical journal

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests