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: 10 August 2005

Reviewer: Gloria Macassa

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Review Report regarding the manuscript “Effects of mother’s socio-economic status on the management of febrile conditions in their under-five children in a resource limited setting”

The question posed by the authors is of importance for low-income countries (especially in Sub-Saharan countries) where very few studies have attempted to investigate the relation between Socio-economic position and health outcomes. The data have been collected appropriately. However the authors may need to pay attention to the following:

Discretionary revisions

1- In the beginning of the background, the authors discuss the effects of socio-economic factors on the mortality decline in the 19th century. They mention McKeown and other names…but surprisingly they do not make reference to Szreter who had the strongest criticism to McKeown, since he has looked at the same data for England and Wales.
2- The title objective of the study is to assess the effects of mother’s socioeconomic status on the management of febrile conditions in children under age of five in a low-income country. It would be useful if the authors added more references (even if few) of studies looking at measurement of socio-economic position and other health outcomes in low-income countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. For example see Social Science and Medicine 2003; Volume 57 and so on….

Major compulsory revisions

1- The methodology section needs to be revised in order to give the reader more information on what the study is all about. As I understand, the authors use education, income and occupation as measures of socioeconomic position/status. However the authors failed to explain why these measures and how these categories were created. For example in Table 1 there are no women with “No education” or in relation to occupation what the category “Others” means (if that includes other professions and unemployed people etc…). On the other hand what “Income” means. It is known that in many poor countries especially in Sub-Saharan Africa many people work in the informal sector (especially women) and more than that in those settings income may be a combination of “Neto and In-kind Income). This needs to be clarified.

2- The authors present results based on a regression analysis in Tables 3 and 4. In these tables regression is made using the variables Occupation and Income. Furthermore they found a
relationship between mother’s occupation and the mother’s management of febrile conditions. Looking at the analysis procedure and to the results one keep wondering if these relationships found (with occupation and income) were enough controlled for (meaning to other factors such as education, mother’s age ……). It is known that both occupation and education are closely linked to education and this can be an important confounder in the associations that can be found between the two former factors and health outcomes. I would strongly recommend a revision of the analytical procedure.

3- I wonder if the authors could provide the results in one only one table with different Models which could guide the reader to what were the steps taken during the analysis. I believe this could facilitate the message the author’s want to bring from the results.

4- Would it be possible for the authors to have the results with confidence intervals instead of standard errors? That could give the readers a better understanding of the strength of the found relationships.

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