Author's response to reviews

Title: Association between health worker motivation and healthcare quality efforts in Ghana

Authors:

Robert Kaba Alhassan RK (arkabason@gmail.com)
Edward Nketiah-Amponsah (enamponsah@ug.edu.gh)
Nicole Spieker (n.spieker@pharmaccess.org)
Paul van Ostenberg (PVanOstenberg@jcrinc.com)
Alice Ogink (a.ogink@pharmaccess.org)
Tobias Rinke de Wit (t.rinkedewit@pharmaccess.org)

Version: 3 Date: 16 July 2013

Author's response to reviews: see over
Introduction

We wish to express our appreciation to the editor and the reviewers for the opportunity to revise this manuscript for re-submission. The comments are constructive enough to improve on the quality of the manuscript.

All comments have been addressed to the best of our ability per each reviewer’s comments. Kindly find below the responses to the three reviewers. We look forward to your response on the current/updated manuscript.

Summary of Updates/Revisions on Manuscript

- **Title of manuscript:**
  - No revision
- **Authors:**
  - No revision
- **Abstract:**
  - Revised: “Purpose” section reformulated. Word count of abstract reduced from 287 words to 285 words
- **Main manuscript:**
  - Sections reformulated are: Background, Methods, Discussion, Policy recommendations, and conclusions
  - Total word count for entire manuscript reduced from 4,984 words to 4,583 words (excluding tables, figures and references)
- **References:**
  - Revision: Two references removed. Total number of references reduced from 35 to 33
- **Tables:**
  - No revision
- **Figures:**
  - No revision
Comment 1: Aim of the project only stated in the abstract: neither the results nor the conclusions specify attainment of this goal
   o Response:
      ▪ The aim of the study, “To identify interventions at health worker level that contribute to quality improvement in health facilities in Ghana” to a large extent has been met. This is because, possible interventions at staff and health facility level to improve motivation and quality care delivery were outlined in “Policy recommendations” section of the manuscript (See the three key intervention areas in Pages 14-15)
      ▪ The “Conclusion” section of the manuscript also emphasized on the need to maintain a balance in implementation of financial and non-financial incentives for health staff which have been presented in Table 3 (Table 3: Differences in staff satisfaction with 4 aggregate markers of staff motivation)
      ▪ The differences in staff motivation levels (by facility ownership and geographical location of health facilities) thus form the basis the policy advice on intervention areas to motivate health workers
      ▪ In line with the reviewer’s comment, relevance of the proposed staff motivation interventions towards attainment of the health related MDGs has been indicated in the first policy recommendation in Pages 14-15 of the manuscript

Comments on other sections of manuscript
   o Response:
      ▪ No new comments from reviewer
Reviewer 2

Title: Association between health worker motivation and healthcare quality efforts in Ghana

Version 2. Date: 27 June 2013

Reviewer: Nida P Harahap

- Reviewer’s report
  - **Major compulsory revisions**
    - **Comment 1:** “The Discussion is too long and not clear. The references are not appropriately referred to clarify the findings. The explanation of the references is too wordy”.
      - **Response:**
        - Length of discussion shortened in line with reviewer’s suggestion.
        - Likewise, references used to explain thematic areas have been reduced to minimize repetition and wordiness as pointed in the reviewer’s comment. The discussion section is hence reduced from 1,525 words to 1,020 words.
    - **Comment 2:** “The correlation amongst the result, the discussion, the conclusion and the implication policy do not substantiate the purpose of the study”.
      - **Response:**
        - In line with reviewer’s comment, the discussion and conclusion have been revised to reflect the results section and the purpose of the study. See revisions at the discussion section in pages 10-13 of the updated manuscript.
    - **Comment 3:** “The conclusion seems to include the policy implication/recommendation, i.e. the last 2 sentences of last paragraph in conclusion section (second paragraph, page 15)”
      - **Response:**
        - The authors agree that some emphasis was made on recommendations in the “conclusion” section which sounded repetitive and misplaced. In view of this, the entire “conclusion” section was revised to remove the policy implications and recommendations. The revised text can be found in paragraphs 1&2 under the “Conclusion” section in Page 14.
    - **Comment 4:** “The discussion seems to include the recommendation, i.e. The last 2 sentences of paragraph 12 (page 13) and Paragraph 13 (page 13)”
      - **Response:**
        - Identified paragraphs under “discussion” section revised and incorporated in the “policy recommendations” section.
Comment 5: “The policy implication must refer to the findings in the conclusion section”
Response:
- Section on “policy recommendations” revised in line with reviewers’ comments. The revised text is found in the “Policy recommendations” section in Pages 14-15 of the revised manuscript

Comment 6: “The limitation section must be created: Last sentence in Paragraph 5, paragraph 6 (page 11) and last sentence in paragraph 9 (page 12) should place in the limitation section”.
Response:
- In line with reviewer’s suggestion, “Limitations” section has been created in Page 13-14 (paragraphs 1-3).
- The authors however wish to explain that Paragraphs 5 & 6 (Page 11) and paragraph 9 (page 12) are not limitations per se because in the methodology section (pages 4-7) the sampling strategy that involved only primary healthcare facilities was outlined. Paragraphs 5, 6 & 9 were therefore presented in the discussion section to explain possible reasons for these results.

Minor Essential Revisions
- Comment 1: Be consistent in using the sentence “quality care and patient safety”
Response:
- In line with the reviewer’s suggestion, the phrase “quality care and patient safety” is consistently used through the manuscript to depict indicators of quality service delivery as per the NHIS accreditation tool and levels of efforts in health facilities to reduce risk and guarantee patient safety.

Comment 2: “Abstract: last sentence in the purpose”
Response:
- Last sentence in the “purpose” under the “abstract” has been revised to read: “The aim is to identify interventions at health worker level that contribute to quality improvement in healthcare facilities in Ghana”.

Comment 3: “Background”: last sentence in paragraph 10 (page 4). Last paragraph in “Background” section should be placed in the “Methods” section
Response:
- In line with the reviewer’s suggestion, the last paragraph in the “Background” section has been moved to “Methods” section specifically under “Study design and data collection” (paragraph 3 of Page 5).

Comment 4: “The first and the second paragraph ( page 4 ) in the “Methods” section should place in the background section”
Response:

- As suggested by reviewer, first and second paragraphs in Page 4 moved to the Background (last 2 paragraphs, page 4).

Comment 5: “What hypothesis will be tested? (Statistical analysis)(paragraph 2, page 6)”

Response:

- The hypothesis tested in the study has been stated in the “Statistical analysis” section (last sentence of the last paragraph) as follows: “level of health worker motivation is associated with level of effort by primary healthcare facilities to improve quality care and patient safety” (Page 7)

Comment 6: Policy Implication should change to “Recommendation” and place after the “conclusion” section

Response:

- The authors agreed “Recommendation” should be added to the “Policy implications” and not replaced completely by the former. The section is thus titled “Policy recommendations”. This gives a better reflection of the points outlined under the section.
- As suggested by the reviewer, “Policy recommendations” section is placed after the “conclusion”. Though the Human Resources for Health (HRH) journal does not clearly state arrangement regarding “policy recommendations” and “conclusion” in the Author Guidelines, a number of articles published in the HRH journal use this arrangement.

Comments on other sections of manuscript

Response:

- No new comments from reviewer
Reviewer 3
Title: Association between health worker motivation and healthcare quality efforts in Ghana

Version 2. Date: 3 June 2013
Reviewer: Delanyo Dovlo

- Reviewer’s report
  - Comment 1: “Some typos here and there”
    - Response:
      - Identified typographical mistakes have been corrected in the revised manuscript.

  - Comment 2: “Discussions on policy implications seem rather thin. How could staff motivation be included in NHIA accreditation for example? What kind of health infrastructure investments motivates staff?”
    - Response:
      - Reviewer’s suggestion acknowledged and incorporated. The first and second points under “Policy implications” (Pages 14-15) have been updated and developed on specific/illustrative areas for intervention.
      - The authors recognize that sometimes in an attempt to fall within word counts of journals, vital information and details may be left out inadvertently. The reviewer’s observation has therefore been a good reminder on the need to balance details with maintaining required manuscript length.

  - Comments on other sections of manuscript
    - Response:
      - No new comments from reviewer