Reviewer's report

Title: Joint Special issue,[E.15]: Filling the Gaps in Ghana: Midwifery Tutors' Capacity and Propensity to Teach Contraception, Post-abortion Care, and Legal Pregnancy Termination

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Reviewer: Philomena Efua Nyarko

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Title of Paper – Filling Gaps in Ghana: Midwifery Tutor Capacity and Propensity to Teach Contraception, Post Abortion Care, and Legal Pregnancy Termination.

Summary
The paper delves into a fairly unexplored area and addresses quite an important research question regarding the capacity and willingness of midwifery tutors to offer clinical training in contraception, post abortion care and legal termination of pregnancy. The authors provide some evidence of the link between unsafe abortion and the high maternal mortality ratio in Ghana. They then justify the need to strengthen the provision of safe abortion services through comprehensive pre-service training of midwives who are the main providers of such services, while pointing out the deficiencies in the current midwifery training curricula. The data for the study are obtained through a structured self-administered questionnaire distributed to all tutors in the 14 midwifery training schools in Ghana. The study findings bring to the fore important deficiencies that currently exist in the training of midwives as well as other social influences that might affect the quality of training received by these providers.

Minor Essential Revisions

Abstract
The authors need to provide an abstract for the paper.

Background
1) Literature - There was a general lack of literature on the topic under study. The authors need to indicate whether there has been any similar study undertaken elsewhere. If not, this should be made clear.

2) In spelling out the study methodology, the authors failed to define the main indicators used for the study. Some of the terms used in the study title are also not reflective of what is in the main body of the text. For example, while in the title, we see the terms “capacity and propensity to teach”, in the main body we have “readiness and willingness to offer...” This is a bit confusing, as these terms can have different interpretations. The authors thus need to be clear on which ones they really want to work with and what the working definitions are.

3) A number of omissions and other editorial issues were identified in the
background information. These are listed as follows:

a. Page 1, paragraph 1, sentence 1, line 2 – insert “the” between “to” and “country”

b. A reference should be provided at the end of the first sentence.

c. The authors seem to be mixing two approaches for citing references, e.g., at one point they cite a reference as “Aboagye et al...; Andersen Clark et al...” and at another point they use numbers. They should decide on which approach they would like to use and be consistent with it throughout paper. Is Anderson a first name? If, so then it should be dropped if the decision is to adopt that approach of citing references.

d. The fifth sentence of the first paragraph has to be revised to include an explanation for the observation that most skilled personnel are found in urban areas (e.g. is it because of the skewed distribution of health care facilities or there may be some other reason?)

e. In lines 15 and 16 of the first paragraph, the authors make a statement which is not true i.e. “because........ are not allowed......” Can this be substantiated? If so what is the time frame for such evidence? There are also editing issues that need to be looked at in that statement e.g. “…allowed providing safe abortion services”

f. The use of the acronym CAC in the bottom fifth line is not previously defined.

g. Third to last line – change “influencial” to “influential”.

h. Page 2, last sentence under background – replace “task-shifting” with the appropriate form to match the context.

i. As already indicated, how were “readiness” and “willingness” defined? For example was readiness defined in terms of facilities to teach the subject or in terms of the required knowledge?

Methods

4) The methodology is sound and well described to the extent that it can be replicated. However, there are a few essential points that need to be made indicated in the write-up. For example, on page 3, there was no indication of the total number of midwives who were expected to be interviewed. This must be clearly stated.

5) Page 3, third sentence under methods – Who were these other tutors? Were they full time tutors or part-time tutors?

6) Who took responsibility for ensuring that the other tutors who were not present at the time the team called at the school received their questionnaires?

7) Why was the response rate so low (49%)? The authors need to offer an explanation for this seemingly low response rate.

8) Page 3 – revise line 7 under Methods. There seems to be an omission between “done” and “and”.

9) Line 8 - replace “are” with “is”.

10) Page 4 – replace “Verse” in second bullet with “versus”. Also, check and
correct word on page 5.

Results

11) The results section has no heading that presents information about readiness and capacity to teach abortion care. Readers are thus left to make their own decisions about the study objectives with other subheadings such as “Personal beliefs versus professional responsibility”

12) The standard format for data reporting are well adhered to manuscript follows covering per but leaves the reader to make these provides sections has

13) Page 5 – Provide a reference for first sentence.

14) Page 5 – revise last sentence of second paragraph

15) Page 5 - Revise first sentence of last paragraph for clarity.

16) The issue of readiness (or is it capacity?) was not covered in the paper. Evidence provided in the results section mainly point to willingness to teach the subject. If knowledge was used as an indication of readiness (capacity) then, this must be clearly stated. If any other indicators of readiness (e.g. training methods, equipment) were used, these must be specified.

17) Page 6 - there is the need for minor editorial work on the sections on motivation and hesitations to teach comprehensive abortion care.

Discussion

18) The findings are satisfactorily discussed and possible explanations offered.

19) There is the need for some editorial work on pages 7 and 8. E.g., page 7, first paragraph, last sentence: replace “well-vested” with an appropriate word. The sentence appears to be misplaced. Also, shouldn’t this statement be in the concluding section? Also, the last sentence under discussion should read “Ideally, a provider’s personal beliefs should not influence a client’s access to abortion care. However, religious and cultural values influence.....”

Conclusion

20) The conclusions drawn are appropriate and are based on the study findings. However, the inclusion of the abortion law in the study curriculum was not explicit.

21) Page 9, first paragraph, third sentence – change “they” to “providers”.

22) Page 9, second paragraph, first sentence – provide a reference for this statement.

23) Page 9, paragraph 2, sixth sentence should read “Training guidelines should be prepared and disseminated.....”

24) Page 9, paragraph 2, seventh sentence – change “regularly” to “a regular”.

25) The conclusions about “willingness” and “capacity” to provide abortion care should be explicitly stated.

Authors’ contributions
1) No reference was made to Joseph Mills. There is also no author with the initials JC. Felix Nyante was also omitted from the section.

References
1) Owing to the mixed nature of referencing, Aboagye et al, (Anderson) Clark et al and UNICEF were left out of the list of references.

Level of interest
This article makes an important contribution to the field. The findings provide good insights into a fairly low researched area and if utilized well will improve the provision of safe abortion services in the country.

**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.