Reviewer's report

**Title:** Embedding health research into decision-making processes in low- and middle-income countries

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 25 March 2013

**Reviewer:** Erica Di Ruggiero

**Reviewer's report:**

This article addresses a very salient topic of relevance to health system researchers and decision-makers globally. The novel application of the "embeddedness" concept to understand the conditions that enhance uptake of research within LMIC health systems makes this article particularly timely.

The following suggestions are offered in the spirit of strengthening the contents of the article.

Minor essential revisions:

Introduction/Background - The authors provide a useful background on the concept of "embeddedness" to situate their analysis. However, information is lacking on their conception of health systems. Some reference is made to the WHO health systems framework. While this framework is well-known, the authors should still provide an operational definition of each building block of the framework as these are used to report on results later on.

There is some mention of why this framework was selected (i.e. " Since health systems are characterized by a diversity of institutions and activities, we organized our data according to the World Health Organization’s Health Systems Framework" ), however, the rationale for using this framework is not sufficiently convincing. Is there an imperative for organizations to use this framework? Why did you think that it lent itself to the study of embeddedness?

Conclusion - This section could be strengthened. Are the concluding statements applicable in most LMIC contexts or was the literature review more indicative of certain country contexts? The authors make general statements but it is unclear in which contexts they might be most applicable. Perhaps you aren't able to make such a determination but it may be worth acknowledging this limitation elsewhere (see earlier comments) given the importance of contextual influences in shaping health systems and related decision-making. Relatedly, are there particular areas that the authors might wish to suggest that require further research (i.e. to further test the attributes of your conceptual framework for embeddedness in health research?) For example, the authors could comment on the need to further study the relative influence of historical, political and other forces in shaping the "pathways through which research enters into the decision-making environment ", or the need to further understand under which conditions are a more complex array of actors engaged ( your results point for
instance to the type of policy), etc.

Compulsory revisions

Methods - this section requires strengthening. The authors note that the following electronic databases were searched up to December 2011. How far back did they conduct the search and why? Were inclusion and exclusion criteria used? Did they use an iterative process to arrive at the search terms used? What was the role of the author(s) in the review of search results?

There is no discussion of the limitations of the approach used.

**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