Author's response to reviews

Title: Translating research into maternal health care policy: a qualitative case study of the use of evidence in policies for the treatment of eclampsia and pre-eclampsia in South Africa

Authors:

Karen KL Daniels (karen.daniels@mrc.ac.za)
Simon SA Lewin (Simon.Lewin@lshtm.ac.uk)

Version: 3 Date: 19 November 2008

Author's response to reviews: see over
Translating research into maternal health care policy: a qualitative case study of the use of evidence in policies for the treatment of eclampsia and pre-eclampsia in South Africa

Responses to reviewers’ comments

The reviewer’s comments are highlighted in italics and our responses are in plain text.

Reviewer's report

Version: 2 Date: 5 November 2008
Reviewer number: 2

Reviewer's report:
The authors have provided satisfactory and thoughtful responses to all of the concerns that I raised in my review. They have also made appropriate changes in the manuscript. Although the authors do not mention it in the response letter, I feel that Box 1 (formerly Box 3) is greatly improved and much clearer now. Overall, I think the manuscript is improved and now acceptable for publication. I have just a few discretionary revisions.

We thank the reviewer again for their original feedback and we are happy that they find the document improved as a consequence of our response to this feedback.

Discretionary revisions:
1. In response to Reviewer One’s comments, I also wondered why there were no events on the timeline after 2003. The authors now state that the study encapsulated the period 1970 - 2005, but being that it is now 2008, the reader does wonder if there were any events or changes in policy after 2003.

We have confirmed with a senior academic obstetrician that there have been no changes since 2003. We have therefore made no changes to the text.

2. Even if anecdotal or just data from one or two major referral hospitals, I still think it would be helpful to have in the introduction something about the actual use of magnesium sulphate for eclampsia in South Africa. One doesn't know if under-use of this evidence-based practice is still (or ever was) a problem in South Africa or not. I wondered what were the "structural factors" that hampered the translation into national policy of evidence regarding the effectiveness of this intervention in Zimbabwe and Mozambique? Do the same factors exist in South Africa?
We have given this much consideration including discussing it with a senior academic obstetrician. He agrees with us that this question can only be answered in a study of its own. We would not like to offer suppositions about something we are really not certain about. Again we have therefore not made any changes to the text.

3. The authors’ statement in the responses to the comments "While the event of the South African change in government may be unique, we believe that opportunities for change in policy (policy windows) present themselves in most settings, for example when elections bring in a new government or when there is a change of health minister or senior health department officials." could be included in the paper to strengthen the applicability / lessons for other countries.

We have now incorporated this sentence on page 28.