Reviewer's report

Title: Primary care research on health transition in Africa: time for action

Version: 1 Date: 15 December 2010

Reviewer: Robert Cumming

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting commentary on a topic that is still neglected: non-communicable diseases in sub-Saharan Africa. The authors make a number of excellent points but I think the paper would benefit from some revision.

Major compulsory revisions

1. My main concern about the paper is that there is quite a lot of overlap between this paper and a recent Viewpoint by the same authors published in 2010 in Tropical Medicine and International Health. I think the authors need to try harder to distinguish the content of the two papers.

2. This paper is not really about primary care and so the title should be changed. (And a title change would help achieve issue no. 1 above.)

3. The abstract is too long (347 words), particularly in relation to the length of the paper (1311 words).

Minor essential changes

1. Page 3, para 2, sentence 1. The first line and the list of risk factors in parentheses say much the same thing.

2. Page 3, para 4, line 2. Is nutritional status an NCD?

3. Page 3, para 4. This paragraph should also include specific mention of the NCDs that seem to be associated with HIV and its treatment, for example diabetes.

4. Page 3, para 5, sentence 2. I do not agree with the inference that NCDs are a bigger problem in Africa than in other developing countries.


6. Page 4, para 2. A large part of this paragraph is about the need for cohort studies to identify risk factors for NCDs. I agree that this is important but it does not seem particularly relevant to primary care. At least, it is no more relevant to primary care than it is to other aspects of health - particularly whole population approach public health interventions.
7. Page 4, para 2. The WHO STEPwise approach needs to be mentioned.

Discretionary

1. "Health transition" may need an explanation for the readership of this journal.

2. Discussion, para 1, sentence 1. Are psychiatric disorders NCDs?

3. Discussion, para 2, last sentence. I am surprised that there were 10,000 deaths due to ischaemic heart disease in Uganda in 2004. My experience in that country is that most heart disease is hypertensive heart failure, not myocardial infarction.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.