Reviewer's report

Title: A bibliometric analysis of childhood immunisation research productivity in Africa since the onset of the Expanded Programme on Immunisation in 1974

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Reviewer: Jean-Marie Okwo Bele

Reviewer's report:

This research topic is timely and relevant.

The following comments are meant to increase the potential impact of the paper:

Major Compulsory Revisions: the conclusions could be further strengthened if the authors address the following points:

1. The authors conclude that private health expenditure (the only variable significantly associated with research productivity in multivariate analysis) “may be a proxy for the economic development status of a country”. A discussion on existing data supporting private health expenditure as an indicator of economic development status, including why this would be a better indicator of economic development than total health expenditure or GDP, would be a useful justification for this conclusion.

1.2. Given the strong association with private health expenditure, a brief explanation of how this indicator was measured in the source reports might yield more understanding.

1.3. The conclusion that the study results (lack of association between coverage and research productivity) may indicate lack of communication between health decision-makers, programme managers and researchers is not justified by the study findings.

Minor essential revisions:

1. An important variable that is not addressed is that of research capacity, which could be a significant factor in the number, quality and type of immunization research conducted. Some measures of capacity could be number of medical schools and public health schools and health research institutions in the country.

2. While in the introduction the authors cite the ‘inter-related components of the immunization programme, there is no indication of what the research papers published in Africa is addressing. We believe such information is useful in such a paper.

3. The reference to research priority capacity development in the discussion section is not substantiated. While doing this, the authors could refer to the Lancet series on the Decade of Vaccines, published in June 2011.

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 I have no competing interest