Reviewers report

Title: Maternal mortality revisited: The application of the new ICD-MM classification system in reference to maternal deaths in Sri Lanka

Version: 1
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Reviewer: Samuel Mills

Reviewers report:

Thanks for the opportunity to review this paper. The authors employed the WHO guidelines on applications of ICD-10 to deaths during pregnancy, childbirth, and the puerperium (ICD-MM) to identify maternal deaths due to suicides which were not previously captured with the ICD-10 guidelines. The authors had reported an increase in maternal mortality ratio (MMR) using the new guidelines. This study will be an important contribution to the literature on the new ICD-MM classification. Please see below comments for your consideration.

Major Compulsory Revisions

118 deaths during pregnancy or within 12 months of delivery from 2005 to 2011 in Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa districts were analyzed. Given that it is stated in page 6 paragraph 1 that the data set was complete for the period 2009 to 2011, the authors may want to restrict the analysis to this latter period or justify why the incomplete data from 2005 to 2008 was included in the analysis.

In page 6, it is stated that “The revised data showed that the number of maternal deaths to be included in the national MM statistics is 98 compared 69 deaths that were originally included according to the present maternal death investigation system in Sri Lanka, which is a 42% increase (Table-3).” The authors may want to fully explain how they computed or arrived at the increase from 69 to 98 maternal deaths. For instance, in table 1 the number of maternal deaths reported in the surveillance system was 53 (36 direct plus 17 indirect) and not 69; by definition, late maternal deaths, accidental or incidental deaths are excluded in the computation of maternal mortality ratios. Further, table 2 presents ICD-10 coding of suicide deaths of the total of 118 deaths; it will be good to include another column to indicate suicide deaths that were considered maternal deaths using the new guidelines (excluding late maternal deaths). Similarly, in table 3, append a column to show the breakdown of causes of maternal deaths previously reported in the routine surveillance system (or using the previous guidelines).

Minor Essential Revisions

The paper is well-written but the authors may want to proofread to correct minor errors eg in page 1, “…women who delivered within last 12 months were included in this study”- within 12 months of termination of pregnancy is meant and not the 12 months prior to the study. Also in page 3 “Even in countries where
MM data available…”, ‘are’ is missing between MM and data; page 2 “suicide” instead of “suicied”

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

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**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