Reviewer's report

Title: The experience of dysmenorrhoea among Ghanaian Senior High and University students: Pain characteristics and effects

Version: 3 Date: 8 April 2014

Reviewer: SUBIDITA CHATTERJEE

Reviewer's report:

1. Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined?

Symptoms of dysmenorrhoea (though well defined as a question) are written in all gynecology textbooks and in quite detail. So the research question of finding out more about this is not really adding value to the existing body of knowledge. However the cultural context and the extreme responses on dysmenorrhoea may be of some interest to some researchers.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replicate the work?

The methods to investigate the symptoms of dysmenorrhoea are okay. They can also be replicated. But the critical question that needs to be answered is, “So what?” We see young girls are suffering as a result of dysmenorrhoea.

But one question that seems to have been missed and could have actually added value to this paper is “Did the girls get any treatment for their suffering as a result of dysmenorrhoea”.

Some knowledge on the topic of dysmenorrhoea seems to be missing.

Nowhere has it been linked to prostaglandin as the causative factor of dysmenorrhoea, which is already a well-known fact.

Nowhere have the young girls been asked whether they took any medication and if yes, what that medication was. Then at least the research would have thrown some light on whether girls are getting the right treatment for the problem. I think adding a gynaecologist to the team could solve this drawback.

3. Are the data sound and well controlled?

The data seemed to be sound and well controlled for the purpose that this paper was intended. However, due to a limited study design, the data is apparently not adequate. In order to turn this paper around, I think it may be necessary to go back to the girls and ask them whether they had access to services.

Access to services, especially on the topic of dysmenorrhoea could be an interesting addition to the existing body of knowledge.
Also the treatment of dysmenorrhea is pretty straightforward nowadays. Just using a prostaglandin inhibitor curbs the pain in most cases.

The question is why did these girls have to suffer so much? Is it because they did not have any access to gynaecologists or did they not have enough skilled providers or the medicines were not available?

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
   Yes.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
   Yes. But no direction has been provided as to how the authors suggest solving the problem that they said they would be solving as a result of this research. They have talked of education about dysmenorrhea to these girls but such education has no meaning unless it includes education on access to services and the right kind of treatment for the same.

6. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
   Yes.

7. Is the writing acceptable?
   The English writing standard seems okay.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Extend the research question to: Symptoms of dysmenorrhea, what can be done about it and how?
2. Collect additional data on access to services for treatment of dysmenorrhea for the same girls who reported on symptoms during dysmenorrhea. This could add on to the existing body of knowledge.
   Examples of questions to be asked:
   Did you have access to a doctor or nurse for your problem? If not, why not?
   Was it because of non-availability of a health facility or gynecologist? Was it that the service provider did not have adequate skills? Was it because of non-availability of prescribed medicine?
   Did you take any medicine for the problem? If yes, what was it?
3. Make sure the advice includes education on access to services.

Discretionary Revisions:

Adding a gynecologist to the research team may help address some of the knowledge gaps. For example the additional symptoms of nausea, vomiting etc.
are all due to prostaglandin. These have not been commented on. This could also check whether the treatment the girls were receiving are adequate or not?

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

'I declare that I have no competing interests'