Reviewer’s report

Title: Facilitators and barriers to facility-based delivery in low- and middle-income countries: A qualitative evidence synthesis

Version: 1 Date: 11 May 2014

Reviewer: Shehla Zaidi

Reviewer’s report:

This can make an extremely interesting paper, of good practical import for researchers and policymakers working in the area of maternal care, provided suggested further improvements are made to the paper.

1. Write-up of the Methodology needs further elaboration. the appended tables show that sufficient level of work has gone in but the narrative does not do it justice. Particularly needed are details on what basis the studies were included or excluded. The CASP quality assessment tool is mentioned but details are needed on what this is and how you adapted it.

2. The search can also be widened with use of other search engines especially for grey literature. Just 2 search engines for a systematic review appears narrow.

3. Qualitative research needs equal rigor as quantitative research. Please show the MESH words in a table. Also what was the criteria for shortlisting, the difficulties faced in the process and how these were resolved.

4. Was a software used for coding, as it helps in data organization and retrieval, especially if the volume of studies is large. More and more qualitative studies are using a software.

5. Results: The findings are well written but Quality of Care needs substantial enhancement as it is presently confined to perceptions related to staff attitudes. There is much more which can go here, very fundamental quality issues such as: 24/7 functionality of health centers, presence of female staff, availability of supplies and medicines.

6. Your Table 2 indicates High, Moderate and Low certainty of evidence. This needs to be brought into the narrative of the Findings section. As there are a number of findings reported here, there needs to be discrimination as which findings were reported more frequently and which were more anecdotal.

7. The Introduction mentions a Conceptual Framework that would emerge from the Findings, however this missing. You have good material to come up with a Framework which would add to the strength of the paper.

8. The discussion focuses primarily on fears related to undesirable birth practices, there is a lot more information that goes missing - such as travel, quality issues, costs etc. You need to bring in this information and then take a stance as to which were more recurring and crosscutting issues across countries.
Also where data was thin, and could have biased results.

Overall, I think this paper is worth investing in further improvements as it has the potential to make a very interesting read.

Thank you for sharing

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

No competing interests