Reviewer's report

Title: Limits to modern contraceptive use among young women in developing countries: a systematic review of qualitative research

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Reviewer: Elizabeth McDermott

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Limits to modern contraceptive use among young women in developing countries: a systematic review of qualitative research

Williamson et al.

This paper addresses modern contraception use among young women in developing countries, a subject which is crucial to global attempts to improve maternal health, childhood mortality and poverty in resource-poor nations. The review of qualitative research studies on factors which influence the use of modern contraceptives among young women adds to our knowledge and understanding of the social, economic and cultural processes involved in contraception utilization. The strength of the paper is that there appears to be a consistency in some of the relevant issues across a number of different countries, especially those in Sub-Saharan Africa..

The paper is clearly and well written with distinctly stated aims. The review has been conducted with methodological rigour and is embedded within up-to-date debates regarding systematic reviews of qualitative research. My recommendation is that the paper is accepted with discretionary revisions. I appreciate the difficulties, in terms of word limits, of reporting systematic reviews of qualitative research but think the paper would be strengthened by the authors considering the following points:

1. Missing from the background to the review and the review itself is the World Health Organisation work in the area of maternal health and mortality. I would have expected a reference point to this in the background, and perhaps, it would have been prudent to search their large and informed databases for relevant research papers.

2. Search strategy – The paper needs to acknowledge that searching for qualitative research studies requires some lateral thinking because of the limited way it has, in the past, been recorded on databases. In addition, the search strategy appears to be limited to a 'developed' world focus, without explaining whether any effort was made to locate research further afield. For example, the WHO website is a good resource for reputable research which may not be reported in Western journals. I am not suggesting an exhaustive search but, for example, WHO, UNAIDS and UN websites.
3. Generalisation and the principle of synthesising different qualitative studies remains highly contentious. The paper needs to state this explicitly and explain more fully the principle of meta-ethnography. This is not really an 'off-the-peg' data analysis strategy and should explained to the reader who may be unaware of the debates.

4. Given the number of studies conducted in Sub-Saharan African countries included in the review, I think more context on women's position in these countries might be helpful in the background section.

**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:**

'I declare that I have no competing interests'