Reviewer’s report

Title: Unsafe abortion in rural Tanzania - the role of traditional providers and effectiveness of plant species used as abortion remedies

Version: 2

Date: 29 September 2014

Reviewer: Johanne Sundby

Reviewer’s report:

Review of the paper: Unsafe abortion in rural Tanzania...

This paper has three aims, it describes abortion methods used by a sample of women who have sought care for abortion complications, it seeks to understand what types of remedies abortion providers in the folk sector may chose, and it introduces the pharmacological component and plant identification of selected abortifacents. This is an interesting combination of data.

The data on pharmacological and plant characteristics has been presented before, in another paper. This is presented, but I am not sure if anything NEW is introduced in this paper. These data are relevant for understanding why the women actually do abort.

I see that the author(s) have given African folk names and Latin names for some of the plants, but as a very uneducated/lay botanist I would have liked to understand what type of plants these are in more popular language. How easily accessible are these plants? And since their abilities to cause uterine contractions are examined, I would like to understand more about possible toxic effects, like necrotizing activities (as may be another pathway). I also would like a statement about why we need to know about these methods, spelled out (page 4).

I see that the field study was conducted quite a while ago, almost 8 years for the plants, and no exact statement on the other surveys (page 5). Therefore I wonder why this study has not been presented before? Have the data been presented before, or is this the first presentation of the patient and provider data? It is not entirely clear if the objective of the study was to examine types of abortifacents, or if this was an added objective of another study. Please clarify. In the references, ref. 5 and ref 10 are from the same authors. Clarify what is NEW in this paper compared with these two.

Regarding using a questionnaire? I assume this was an interview, not a self administered questionnaire? In that case, a better terminology to use is a structured interview and data report form.

Page 3, second para: I assume that even in Tanzania, many women have illegal medical/surgical abortions if they find a provider who is willing to perform such, not only using traditional methods?
There is of course no data on women not admitted for complications, thus we do not know anything about toxicity of remedies used. Maybe many abort without any complications? This should be mentioned.

Conclusion: Well written paper. Needs a bit more work. Interesting topic.

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

no competing interests. But I am interested in the topic