Author's response to reviews

Title: Ancillary Benefits of Antenatal Ultrasound: The Association Between the Introduction of Low-Cost Antenatal Ultrasound and an Increase in the Numbers of Women Receiving Recommended Antenatal Treatments, a Retrospective Study

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The Editorial Board
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To the editorial board,

Despite consistent commitment and effort from the global public health community, the burden of maternal and neonatal mortality in the developing world remains shockingly high. Strategies which encourage women to come to a modern clinic for antenatal visits and skilled care at delivery instead of utilizing more traditional methods are an important focus of research as the international public health community attempts to accelerate progress towards the targets of Millennium Development Goal 5. Antenatal care and the presence of a skilled attendant at delivery have both shown consistent promise in decreasing maternal mortality and are tracked as proxy indicators for MDG 5.

Our research article analyzes changes in the numbers of women receiving specific recommended antenatal interventions following the introduction of a basic low cost antenatal ultrasound screening program at a health care clinic in rural Uganda. Our data indicates an increase both in the average numbers of women receiving such treatments as HIV testing and prophylactic iron and folate for anemia at the clinic each month, as well as in the intervention rate (defined as number of interventions per clinic visit). These results build on our earlier work that showed an apparent “magnet effect” of ultrasound, with more women coming to the clinic following the introduction of the ultrasound program. This follow up paper demonstrates, not only were more women therefore receiving antenatal care, but that the quality of care improved as measured by intervention rate.

Although BMC Public Health has previously published on maternal mortality reduction efforts, we believe our study is unique and will be of interest to your readership.

Sincerely yours,

Andrew Ross, MD MPH