Reviewer's report

Title: A Qualitative Exploration of Preferences for Delivery at Home, or in Public or Private Hospitals, among Pregnant Women and New Mothers in Northern Karnataka, India

Version: 1 Date: 23 June 2014

Reviewer: Manisha Nair

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting and an important paper for the Indian health system. It highlights substantive issues that are hurdles in improving quality of care and utilisation of health services by pregnant women. However, I am not convinced about the organisation of the findings using Maxwell’s framework.

Major Compulsory Revisions

Methods - analysis and Results section: It seems that the authors are forcing the themes into the segments of the Maxwell’s framework. Maxwell’s definitions of ‘relevance’ and ‘effective’ are not particularly adhered to. The findings are interesting and can be simply presented as health system related and user related. Using the framework reduces clarity. The following is my suggestion about re-organising the themes:

1. Health system related
   1.1. Access (financial and geographical)
   1.2. Public vs private health care
   1.3. Process of care provision
2. User related
   2.1. Acceptability (cultural and social issues)
   2.2. Perceptions of care provision

There are various models of quality of care, but these are developed for a particular purpose and may not be useful as general methods. The authors need not use the same structure that I have suggested, but something more simplified than what they have presented. The quality of care issues are obvious so please do not use Maxwell’s framework to fit your rich data. Kindly change the discussions accordingly.

Methods section – study participants: Can the authors explain why they chose to include women who had a delivery in the past 3 months? There is wealth of literature that show that women’s perception about care during delivery and pregnancy change with the number of days post-delivery and thus the cut-off period need to be carefully chosen.
Methods – analysis section: Kindly elaborate on how the themes were constructed. Can the authors provide an example of the framework/chart that they developed during the course of the analysis? The authors do not describe how they analysed the data stepwise, in particular making reference to how they examined discrepant cases i.e. cases where participants’ views differed from those encapsulated in the overarching themes.

Minor Essential Revisions

Methods – study site and design: Authors mention that the selected districts represent geographic and cultural diversity of the state; can they please write a paragraph to exemplify these diversities?

Results: Please explain JSY, ‘Madilu kit’ and ASHA in the text. You may lose the readers who do not know about the Indian health programmes.

Discretionary Revisions

I am interested in the women’s views about the cash-incentive scheme JSY. How does this fair against the quality of care issues highlighted here in improving utilisation of institutional delivery care services?

**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:**

None