Author's response to reviews

Title: Innovative approaches for improving maternal and newborn health - A landscape analysis

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Author's covering letter for initial submission

Title: Innovative approaches for improving maternal and newborn health - A landscape analysis

Authors: 

Version: 1 Date: 5 January 2015

Comments: see over
Dear Dr D’Souza:

Innovative approaches to improve maternal and newborn health care (MNH) in low- and middle-income countries are often referred to as holding potential to accelerate progress to the health-related Millennium Development Goals. With an increasing number and variety of innovative approaches for health, the landscape of innovations in the area of MNH has grown more complex. Many practitioners and planners have anecdotally heard about or known innovations, but there is no comprehensive, systematic overview to help decide which innovations are ready for scale-up. The landscape and rationalization of innovative approaches tested in MNH remains poorly understood. Policy makers and planners lack a summary of the evidence of effectiveness associated with these interventions, and indications as to which interventions to scale up.

In a team of academicians and UN experts, we have therefore conducted a comprehensive review of innovative approaches associated with maternal and newborn health in low- and middle-income countries. This broad and inclusive review defines and describes the landscape of innovative approaches in maternal and newborn health, identifies where and which innovations have been evaluated, assesses related evidence and identifies areas where evidence is scarce.

We followed standard stages and methods of a systematic review to address the study question. As mandated by the PRISMA guidelines we used as standard methodology, we undertook a systematic search and analysis of published peer-reviewed literature and reports, utilizing standard systematic review search strategies. However, our study aim was to map a range of interventions and related evidence and thus our methodology deviates from a systematic review and meta-analysis in that it does not focus on one intervention.

In order to pursue the health-related Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5 to reduce child and maternal mortality, public health and clinical efforts need to accelerate progress in reducing maternal and newborn deaths. Summarizing over 200 papers and reports, we have produced a comprehensive landscape analysis of innovative approaches in maternal and newborn health. The paper maps and rationalizes the innovative approaches tested in maternal and newborn health, and provides a summary of the evidence associated with these studies.
Given the importance of the topic for maternal and child health professionals and its relevance for policy making and programme planning globally, we believe our manuscript might be a good fit for open-access publication in BMC Medicine.

The manuscript has been read and approved by all authors. All persons listed as authors have contributed to preparing the manuscript and meet International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) criteria for authorship. No person other than the authors listed have contributed to the preparation of the manuscript.

Many thanks in advance for considering our manuscript, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely yours,

Karsten Lunze, on behalf of the authors:

Karsten Lunze, Ariel Higgins-Steele, Aline Simen Kapeu, Julia Kim, and Kim Dickson