Author’s response to reviews

Title: Measuring the quality of maternal and care processes at the time of delivery in sub-Saharan Africa: Development and validation of a short index

Authors:

Vandana Tripathi (vtripathi@engenderhealth.org)
Cynthia Stanton (cstanto2@jhu.edu)
Donna Strobino (dstrobi1@jhu.edu)
Linda Bartlett (lbartlett@jhu.edu)

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To the Editors of BMC Pregnancy & Childbirth:

Attached, please find the revision of our manuscript formerly entitled “Development and validation of a short index to measure the quality of care processes at and immediately following delivery in sub-Saharan Africa.”

Changes have been made in response to the Editor’s Letter dated January 17, 2017. These are itemized below. Page and line numbers below refer to the revised documents. The manuscript files submitted do not have changes tracked or highlighted. We sincerely appreciate the provision of the plagiarism score file, as this greatly streamlined the process of removing or clarifying areas of similarity.

Overall, the comprehensive index developed previously and reported in reference 39 serves as the gold standard against which the new delivery-only index is compared. Therefore, several Tables and Figures are retained despite their appearance of similarity to the plagiarism software. However, we can affirm that all tables, figures, and supplementary materials that were identical to previously published material have been deleted, as itemized below and there is no longer any duplicated content. All text red-flagged by the plagiarism software that could be amended/reworded has been revised. There are a few exceptions to this that are noted below.
Editor Comment:

Please ensure that all tables and figures which were included in your previous publication and which has been included in the paper above is removed. We cannot have a duplication of the tables or figures in this new paper as this would constitute as plagiarism and a serious concern. You can however, still refer to the data within the text. To provide guidance, we have provided the plagiarism score and document as an attachment. As you can see, the tables have been highlighted (tables 1, 2, text after table 2 lines 181-195 page 11, tables 4, and 5 etc). Please ensure that where text overlap exists, these text are reworded. We understand that in certain cases there are limited ways to phrase but we ask that you try to reduce the level of text overlap.

Revisions:

1. Title changed – The title was flagged by the plagiarism scoring software and has been revised.

2. Tables 1, 2, and 3 have been removed and references to the prior article [reference 39] have been added.

3. All three supplementary materials have been removed. Citations 39 and 45 are provided for the content in Supplement 1, and citation 39 for the content in Supplements 2 and 3.

4. Textual revisions to reduce similarity to citation 39 can be found in:

   • The descriptions of maternal mortality (lines 53-54) and newborn mortality (lines 57-58).

   • The descriptions of skilled care utilization and its limitations (lines 59-60, 66-67).

   • The description of challenges in maternity care quality assessment (lines 69-70).

   • The description of routine data sources (line 81-82).

   • Lines 116-120, which now list the dimensions of QoPIIPC identified by the Delphi group, rather than relying on Table 1 (which was identical to the previously published material).
• The description of the secondary data source (lines 132-136).

• The description of the QoC sample design (lines 146-147, 150-151).

• The description of the process by which deliveries were assigned total and index scores (lines 157-160).

• The descriptions of validation benchmarks in lines 168-183 (reflecting the removal of Table 2).

• The description of consent procedures (lines 227-235).

• The description of the sample included in analysis (lines 242-253), addressing the removal of Table 3.

• The descriptions of study limitations (lines 344-351, line 356-357).

• The description of program implications (line 360-386).

Text NOT revised:

A few items red-flagged by the plagiarism software and/or noted above cannot be changed. These are described here.

1. In the abstract and main body, the phrase “quality of intrapartum and immediate postpartum care processes (QoPIIPC)” is red-flagged. This is the concept defined by the Delphi team and underlying the validation of this quality of care index. We cannot substitute another term.

2. Lines 168-169 in the revised manuscript provides a precise explanation of how terms that frequently bear multiple meanings in the public health literature are defined for the purposes of this study. Particularly with the removal of Table 2, describing the validation domains and quantitative benchmarks, this sentence cannot be changed.
3. Lines 191-197 in the revised manuscript describe the definition of area under the receiver operating characteristic curve, our chosen statistical means of assessing the discriminatory strength of our quality of care index. It is not possible to reword this text without garbling the definition.

4. Lines 221-226 in the revised manuscript list the ethical review boards that approved the study protocol in country and the findings of the Johns Hopkins University institutional review board. This text cannot be changed. Amendments have been made as possible to the remainder of the ethical considerations paragraph.

5. The current Table 1 (previously Table 4) was given a red flag because of the indicators in the leftmost column. However, this table must be retained to show the degree to which the comprehensive quality of care index developed previously and the delivery-only index reported here are similar or different. The data and comparisons presented in the results columns are new to this publication.

6. Line 263-4 received a red flag but refer to specific, named dimensions of the QoPIIPC construct. This text cannot be amended.

7. The current Table 2 (previously Table 5) received a red flag because of the validation benchmarks in the leftmost column. However, this table must be retained to show how well the delivery-only index reported here performs against validation benchmarks, as compared to the gold-standard comprehensive index described previously. The data and comparisons presented in the results columns are new to this publication.

8. Lines 274-286 provide reports on statistical comparisons and tests conducted during validation. Several lines in this section were red-flagged by the software; however, these are standard terms for reporting the interpretation of odds ratios, AUROCs, etc., and cannot be readily amended.

9. Lines 308-11 list the validation domains on which the delivery-only index reported here performed well. These are category names that have been precisely defined for statistical validation and cannot be amended. Similarly, the sample sizes and headings for the current Table 4 (previously Table 7) were red-flagged; however, the sample size cannot
be amended, and the headings are validation domain category names that must be retained. The data presented in the results columns are new to this publication.

10. The funding and acknowledgement statements were red-flagged. The same donor supported the previous study and the one reported here has standard requirements for naming/citation, the funding statement cannot be changed. Similarly, the same group of technical experts provided non-authorial support to both studies, and this list cannot be amended.

11. The three figures provide information on the same set of statistical characteristics and validation benchmarks as the earlier publication. However, they are not duplicative as they provide these results for the new index being validated in this manuscript.

Sincerely,

Vandana Tripathi, MPH PhD

Phone: +1.917.532.1731 | Email: vtripathi@engenderhealth.org