Reviewer's report

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

Version: 0 Date: 26 Aug 2016

Reviewer: Affette McCaw-Binns

Reviewer's report:

The paper addresses an important question in MNH, how to routinely assess the quality of care around the time of delivery. I however have two major and some minor challenges:

1. There is a considerable amount of overlap between this paper and reference 39, bordering on self-plagiarism (see Tables 1, 2, 3, Figure 1) with absolutely no reference to their original source

2. I do not feel competent to evaluate the statistical methods employed however given the high level of co-linearity between the two indices (the comprehensive tool condensed from ref 39, and the delivery only index), a statistical review may be useful.

3. The authors are attempting to develop a tool to routinely evaluate the quality of care. Given that over 1000 deliveries were observed from beginning to end, and outcome data are no doubt available, as part of a validation exercise I was expecting to see how the tools performed relative to the outcomes they were expected to influence.

4. There are quite a few typographical errors(p5, line 73: insert "review" after literature; p5, line 73 - unclear what "[x]" refers to; p14, Table 3 - error in row "total deliveries" analysed; p15, Table 4 - seems final column in line 3 is incorrect; seems data on the "# of items >90%" is also incorrect; p19, Table 7 - check column 1 heading - is this "Delivery index" vs "Comprehensive index"?

As a point of interest - it would be useful to state why JHU IRB exempted the protocol from review.

For persons unfamiliar with Africa, it could be stated that Zanzibar is a protectorate of Tanzania.
Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Unable to assess

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I recommend additional statistical review

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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