Reviewer's report

Title: Community health workers can improve child growth of antenatally-depressed, South African mothers: A cluster randomized controlled trial

Version: 3 Date: 9 February 2015

Reviewer: Robert Stewart

Reviewer's report:

This is a useful contribution to the field of maternal depression in LMIC and, in particular, to the untangling of the relationships between maternal depression, child outcomes and interventions aimed improving these. However, there are some issues in how the analysis is presented that the authors might wish to justify/modify:

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. I wonder whether the authors have approached the analysis optimally. They have presented the results as the intervention moderating "depression’s effect on infant nutrition”. It would be helpful for the authors to adjust for confounders e.g. poverty, maternal nutritional status, as even if these are similar between intervention and control groups, they are unlikely to be so between depressed and non-depressed. If depression remains a predictor of infant growth after adjustment, it would be easier to justify using the term "depression’s effect on infant nutrition". It might be even more appropriate to present the results as showing whether depression (which was measured before the intervention) moderates the effect of the intervention on infant growth, as we know that the intervention and control arms are similar at baseline so confounding would not be an issue in this analysis.

Minor Essential Revisions

2. Measures, maternal mood: Please state whether the EPDS was validated in this or similar population and whether different languages were used. If possible state the test characteristics at the EPDS#18 cut-off. What was the mean gestational age when EPDS was administered?

3. The authors might add a paragraph in the discussion highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the design.

4. The authors may also consider reading through the manuscript again to pick up any stray grammatical errors. E.g. Abstract – results line 1: delete both

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests