Author's response to reviews

Title: A systematic review of community-to-facility neonatal referral completion rates in Africa and Asia

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Author's response to reviews: see over
We appreciate the feedback from the reviewer and the editors. Please see below our responses.

Reviewer comments

Discretionary Revisions: 1. It might be helpful to include ‘community health worker’ or ‘community health volunteer’ as keywords.

Edited. “Community health worker” now added.

2. In Results (lines 204-209), authors review where the CHW sends the neonates and briefly discusses touches on who the CHWs are. Can the authors comment on the background or training of the CHWs across the studies? This would be beneficial addition to the manuscript as it appears as though there may be a great variety in their backgrounds.

We have added available information on lines 221-223 and in Supplemental Table 1. However, CHW background and training in general were not well described in the available literature.

3. In Results (lines 210-220), authors discuss the frequency with which CHWs visit. Please consider adding a sentence on when the first visit is made by the CHW. This is included in the table, but warrants being mentioned in the text.

We have added this information in lines 234-235

Major Compulsory Revisions:

1. It is clear that this analysis was very difficult due to variations in contexts, definitions, methods, and aggregation of data across the studies. Authors highlight this in the conclusion of the abstract as well as discussion/conclusions. In lines 432-435, authors mention that details of referral programs are needed for future analyses. Can the authors provide guidance to what kinds of information would be most helpful? It seems the column headers in the Supplemental Table 2 start to outline the most beneficial information, however, are there other pieces of data that would have made the analysis easier? This advice would be extremely beneficial to the readers, researchers, and program implementers.

We have expanded on this in the paragraph beginning on line 412. We have also organized the same information into Table 4.

2. Figure 1 is difficult to follow. It is unclear from the current Figure 1 as to where the reader should look initially or how the reader should follow through the flow diagram. I understand the figure was adapted from Herbert et al. (2012). After looking at the Herbert original graph, I believe the authors should reconsider the Figure in this article. Please consider utilizing the style of the original graphic or overlaying this new one on to the original.

As per request, we have simplified the figure to imitate more closely the Herbert et al. graphic.
Editor comments

Indicate within your title that you are reporting a systematic review

We have added “systematic review” to the title.

Adhere to the PRISMA guidelines for reporting systematic reviews and include a PRISMA checklist as an additional file to your submission

The PRISMA statement has now been added to the submission files and we have made appropriate changes in the main document to comply with PRISMA.