Reviewer’s report

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

Version: 1  Date: 20 July 2015

Reviewer: Katherine Semrau

Reviewer’s report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this interesting literature review on neonatal referral rates and completion of referral in studies where a Community Health Worker (CHW) prompted the referral.

Summary: Authors have completed a review of peer-reviewed & grey literature, as well as across the Saving Newborn Lives network, to find studies/projects that have documented community health worker (volunteer) referral and completion rates to improve care-seeking for ill neonates. Only 8 studies reported data sufficient for inclusion in the analysis. Referral rates varied widely across the 8 studies and completion rates had similar variety. Authors conclude that (1) data cannot be treated to meta-analysis as it is too diverse in methods/definitions, and (2) we understand little about the factors associated with referral and uptake of the referral by the family.

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

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 a beneficial addition to the manuscript as it appears as though there may be a great variety in their backgrounds.

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.

Minor Essential Revisions:
1. None.

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.

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.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.