Author's response to reviews

Title: Maternal depression and malnutrition in children in southwest Uganda: a case control study

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Author's response to reviews:

20th November 20, 2015

The Editor –in-Chief

BMC Public Health
BioMed Central
Floor 6, 236 Gray's Inn Road
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Dear Editor-in-Chief,

Please find enclosed our revised manuscript, entitled “Maternal depression and malnutrition in children in South west Uganda: a case control study” by Ashaba et al. for publication as a Research article in BMC Public Health. In this revised manuscript, we have attempted to address all of the reviewers’ comments, as described in detail in the response to reviewers’ comments on the following pages.

As described in my previous cover letter accompanying our last version of the manuscript, I believe this manuscript fits very well within the scope of BMC Public Health as it covers one of the neglected causes of malnutrition in children in developing countries. We believe the study findings will be of great interest to those involved in health policies and community interventions aiming at improving maternal and child health.
To our knowledge, this is the first report showing an association between maternal depression and malnutrition in children in Uganda and Sub Saharan Africa and we believe our findings will be of particular interest to researchers focusing on maternal newborn and child health. The authors confirm that this manuscript has not been published elsewhere and is not under consideration by another journal and all have approved the manuscript and agree with its resubmission to BioMed Central, BMC Public Health.

Sincerely

Scholastic Ashaba

Response to reviewer comments:

Title: Maternal depression and malnutrition in children in southwest Uganda: a case control study.

Authors: Scholastic Ashaba, Godfrey Zari Rukundo, Florence Beinempaka, Moses Ntaro and John Leblanc

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Journal: BMC Public Health

Article type: Research article

We thank the reviewer for her interest in our manuscript, and for all her helpful comments. Provided below is a point-by-point response describing our attempts to address and incorporate all requested revisions in our manuscript.

Reviewer: Letícia Marques dos Santos

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revision #1 – done

Major Compulsory Revision #2 – done

Major compulsory Revision #3 - Re-review
The authors improved their analysis model; however, some important information is missing on the manuscript. I believe that the final sentence of the data analysis section would be clearer if it was written as it follows: “Logistic regression analysis was used to estimate OR for each variable. Those which demonstrated an association with the outcome were inserted into a multiple logistic regression model to estimate the adjusted OR of association between maternal depression and malnutrition in children.”

RESPONSE: Thank you for the helpful suggestion and we agree that indeed the final sentence of the data analysis section was not clear and we have adopted your suggestion. The last two sentences of the data analysis section now read as “First, we used bivariate logistic regression analysis to estimate OR for each variable. Those that demonstrated an association with the outcome variable were inserted into a multiple logistic regression model to estimate the adjusted OR of association between maternal depression and malnutrition in children.

Major Compulsory Revision #4 (Results I) – Re-review

It is necessary to test if case and control groups are similar or different. I suggest that the authors test if there are differences between the groups and present it in table 1. If there is some group differences, the authors should justify what they have done to control its effects on the association founded.

RESPONSE: we are not clear as to what the reviewer is asking here. If she is asking for hypothesis testing to see if cases and controls are statistically significantly different, this is not considered appropriate for case-controls studies. This is discussed in the STROBE explanation and elaboration document:


“In case-control studies potential confounders cannot be judged by comparing cases and controls. Control persons represent the source population and will usually be different from the cases in many respects.”

and

“Inferential measures such as standard errors and confidence intervals should not be used to describe the variability of characteristics, and significance tests should be avoided in descriptive tables. Also, P values are not an appropriate criterion for selecting which confounders to adjust for in analysis; even small differences in a confounder that has a strong effect on the outcome can be important”.

Never the less we used chi-square analysis to determine if any group differences might be present and in table 1 an extra column was added where by chi-square and p-values recorded. This analysis did not show any statistically significant
differences between case and control groups. (Table 1 on page 15 of the manuscript)

Major compulsory Revision #5 (Results II) - Re-review

I believe that the authors repeated the OR for the association between mother depression and malnutrition in table 3 and 4. In table 4, the OR should be adjusted by all other co-variates inserted in the model.

We agree and thank you for the advice. We have revised our tables 3 and 4. Table 3 shows crude ORs of maternal depression and other socio-demographic factors associated with malnutrition in children. On the other hand table 4 shows adjusted ORs which we generated by inserting all the other co-variates in the regression model (table 3 is on page 17 and table 4 on page 19 of the manuscript)

Major compulsory Revision #6 (Results III) – Done

Minor essential Revision #1 – Done

Minor essential Revision #2 – re-review

I still suggest that authors include in the table title, all the information that the reader needs to understand that table.

Thank you for pointing this and we agree with the comment. We have revised our table titles and we trust the current titles show what the reader needs to understand the tables.

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published.

We have done language corrections and we believe the manuscript is fit for publication.