Reviewer’s report

Title: Community perceptions on the role of sexual activity on stroke: A qualitative study exploring the views of Ghanaian local community residents

Version: 0 Date: 18 Mar 2019

Reviewer: Reviewer 2

Reviewer's report:

PEER REVIEWER ASSESSMENTS:

OBJECTIVE - Full research articles: is there a clear objective that addresses a testable research question(s) (brief or other article types: is there a clear objective)?

Yes - there is a clear objective

DESIGN - Is the current approach (including controls and analysis protocols) appropriate for the objective?

Yes - the approach is appropriate

EXECUTION - Are the experiments and analyses performed with technical rigor to allow confidence in the results?

Yes - experiments and analyses were performed appropriately

STATISTICS - Is the use of statistics in the manuscript appropriate?

N/A - there are no statistics in this study

INTERPRETATION - Is the current interpretation/discussion of the results reasonable and not overstated?

Yes - the author's interpretation is reasonable
OVERALL MANUSCRIPT POTENTIAL - Is the current version of this work technically sound? If not, can revisions be made to make the work technically sound?

Probably - with minor revisions

PEER REVIEWER COMMENTS:

GENERAL COMMENTS: In this interesting study, author evaluated perceptions about sexual function and stroke among people living in rural communities in Ghana. Thematic areas that emerged from group discussions included frequency of sex and stroke, sex position and stroke, ageing and stroke and indiscriminate sex and stroke risk. 255 people participated in the discussion groups. The narratives of the participants showed that the ways through which sex is believed to trigger a stroke include frequency of sexual activity, sex positions, having sex when older and engaging in indiscriminate sex. This article illustrates the importance of understanding local community perceptions of illness in particular in rural areas of developing countries.

The article is interesting, well written and should deserve further consideration for publication in the journal. I have some suggestion to improve the article. I wonder if author could give us some statistics regarding the frequency of these perceptions by specific group, such as gender and age (young versus elderly). Although this is primarily a qualitative research, authors do not provide information regarding male/female ratio, mean age of the participants or the number of participants with age below 30 (range was very wide, between 18 and 75 years) that participated in this study. In Discussion section, I wonder if the influence of some of these variables (to be married vs single; young vs elderly; sexually active vs inactive; etc) could be analyzed.

REQUESTED REVISIONS:

I have some suggestion to improve the article. I wonder if author could give us some statistics regarding the frequency of these perceptions by specific group, such as gender and age (young versus elderly). Although this is primarily a qualitative research, authors do not provide information regarding male/female ratio, mean age of the participants or the number of participants with age below 30 (range was very wide, between 18 and 75 years) that participated in this study. In Discussion section, I wonder if the influence of some of these variables (to be married vs single; young vs elderly; sexually active vs inactive; etc) could be analyzed.

Some questions arisen from this research, for example, were there any significant differences in stroke risk or perception by gender, social or educational level? I see that 25% of participants had never attended school and 50% had secondary education, and that most of people were involved in trading and agriculture. The impact of other cultural factors such as religious practice
and the beliefs about witchcraft should be analyzed. Finally, I wonder if authors analyzed within the responses the perception of sexual activity to be the cause or a risk factor for stroke.

The level of awareness and knowledge about stroke and its symptoms would also be important to be considered among the group of individuals interviewed. Syncope, fainting and other cardiovascular conditions are not equal to stroke; I wonder how much of this perception would be linked with these events or with stroke (stroke, by definition, should be linked with neurological sequel and this is a significant difference from a collapse-like event following sexual activity). Another question that should be addressed is the following: is the lack of sex education a factor that may explain part of these beliefs?

In Methods section, the process of Selection of groups should be addressed. Author should explain in detail the process of selection of groups and how many people refused or rejected to participate in the study.

I understand that the initial project and objective of this study was to evaluate perceptions about stroke in local communities, and only following initial comments and findings from first community interviews that authors focused on sexual function perception and the link with stroke. The fact that this study was not originally planned to evaluate and analyse the link between stroke and sex function, could affect the quality of the interviews obtained? The fact that all participants were remunerated for participating in the study could affect the accuracy of data obtained?

ADDITIONAL REQUESTS/SUGGESTIONS:

Minor points:

I would recommend author to write a paragraph in Introduction section regarding the importance of this topic in a much more global approach, including cross-cultural perception of sexual activity as a stroke risk factor in different geographic and cultural regions of Africa and the rest of the world. Author focused directly in Ghana communities, and I believe that in Introduction this should be put within a much more general context/approach, and global sociological and anthropological data would be nice to have in Introduction.

I wonder if authors should write "sexual function" instead of "sexual functions" through the text. Sexual function may have different aspects including libido or frequency of sexual intercourse, however these are not different sexual functions. I would recommend to put in singular the concept "sexual function".

Abstract: please change "sexual dysfunctions" to sexual dysfunction.

Introduction: Line 18: please change "clinical depression" to "depression".
Introduction, lines 31,32, please change: "stroke particularly impacts sexual functions such as libido, coital frequency, erectile and orgastic potency, and vaginal lubrication and sexual satisfaction" to: "Stroke particularly impacts sexual function including libido, coital frequency, erectile and orgastic potency, and vaginal lubrication and sexual satisfaction".

Introduction, line 40, typo error: please change: "presence of forman Ovale" to "presence of foramen Ovale".

Introduction, lines 33-40 of pdf: Author should not confound causal factor of stroke with stroke risk factors. In their comment: "Among the medical community, there is a stance that the underlying causal factors of stroke in patients that have experienced 'sex triggered stroke' include vasospasm, (14) cerebral haemorrhage or subarachnoid haemorrhage [15], use of birth control pills, presence of foramen ovale [16], and undetected high blood pressure [17]."… We can say that the rupture of a brain aneurysm causing cerebral haemorrhage or a subarachnoid haemorrhage are causes of stroke; however the use of birth control pills, or presence of foramen ovale, or undetected high blood pressure are stroke risk factors (not causal factors) of stroke.

Discussion, page 18, lines 41041: "or erosion of a vulnerable pre-existing plaque, resulting in sudden death or non-fatal cardiovascular event", please change to: "or erosion of a vulnerable pre-existing atheroma plaque, resulting in sudden death or non-fatal cardiovascular event"

References: Please could author confirm that paper cited as ref number 19 has been fully approved and it is pending to be published?


Note: This reviewer report can be downloaded - see attached pdf file.

**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.

Yes
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.

Not relevant to this manuscript

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

Needs some language corrections before being published

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Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

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