Reviewer's report

Title: A Qualitative Exploration of Cervical and Breast Cancer Stigma in Karnataka, India

Version: 0 Date: 04 Oct 2016

Reviewer: Tam Truong Donnelly

Reviewer's report:

This paper addressed an important health topic. The paper needs major editing, especially the section, "Manifestation of Stigma". There are many repeated quotes and issues that were already addressed in the previous section - "Divers".

Abstract:

The method section in the abstract needs to include number of respondents interviewed for each study.

Figure and Tables:

- Figure 2 section "Opportunities for Programmatic Action" is not quite self-explanatory.

- Table 1 needs citing of sources (i.e. Adapted from …).

- Table 2 - good information, but readers then might wonder how stigma was experienced between exposed and unexposed groups.

Background:

- Good information re background/lit review. Review of literature should include more studies related to target population (Indian).
- Needs to include information statistics regarding breast and cervical cancer incidence and mortality rates and if available, these cancer screening rate among targeted population. This would help to further illuminate the negative impact of stigma on the outcome of these cancer diagnosis and treatment, thus significant of this paper's topic.

Methods:

- Please add a section on the theoretical framework and how it guides the study.

- A very good use of table 2 to communicate sample design and participants' details.

- Procedure needs elaboration on how the sample size for both studies were determined.

- Under section "data collection and analysis" please briefly categorize the type of questions asked for the individual in-depth interview and for the focus group - few examples of these questions would be useful for the readers.

Result:

- Section "Diver" is well written.

- Line 236, I would suggest the subheading be: "Cancer as a death sentence and the negative impact of having cancer"

- The section "Manifestations of stigma" needs major editing. It elaborates on issues and has many quotes that were already addressed in the previous section so it is quite redundant.

Discussion:

- The authors emphasize pertinent findings but to be more relevant, they need to include recommendations that would be of significant in addressing stigma in breast cancer and cervical cancer for the target population.
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.

Unable to assess

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

No

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

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

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?
If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

I declare that I have no competing interests.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal.