Reviewer's report

Title: Barriers and facilitators to uptake of cervical cancer screening among women in Uganda: a systematic review

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Reviewer: Eva Kantelhardt

Reviewer's report:

Black and colleagues present a well written systematic review on barriers and facilitators to cervical cancer screening among women in Uganda. The topic is of high relevance considering global efforts towards elimination of cervical cancer. Screening is a crucial element and access to screening essential. The authors found a considerable number of papers which focus on the topic. They have nicely extracted the important factors associated with uptake or non-uptake of screening service. I congratulate the authors to the thorough work.

I may suggest some ideas:

Background

1 The reader may not be familiar with the situation of health service and cancer service in Uganda. It would be helpful to minimally describe or outline the health system and National Cancer Control Plan and where screening is planned to be done in Uganda (which health service level?).

2 Accessibility is crucial for any uptake of health service. Is there data on how many screening Units are active in Uganda? Who offers screening in public and private? Who is trained? What is the National screening strategy?

3 The authors repeatedly talk about HPV. Please clarify - are you referring to high risk types?

4 Line 68-70: It is not clear why the poor follow-up and limited recall system is related to low sensitivity of cytology. To me I suppose that cytology screening is impossible due to lack of pathologists (since despite low sensitivity it has been successful in high resource countries). Of course additionally screening every 2-3 years is difficult - but this is true for all screening methods therefore a once or twice I a lifetime approach needs to be chosen.

5 Line 78 Is there any HPV testing available in Uganda?
Methods

6 Line 163 Why were reasons for non-attendance of HIV pts. excluded? Of those women described as normal population, also a reasonable proportion will be positive and thus this group is among the population studied.

Results and discussion

7 The proportion of women screened seems very low. Was there any information weather at all the women had a chance to be screened? The authors focus on barriers and facilitators to screening much on the side of the women. But this closely links with the problem of service availability and efforts needed to use the service. This should be mentioned in limitations.

8 table 3 "CCS not considered important" and discussion line 428 - the authors should critically discuss that indeed there could be more important issues which women need to consider even if they correctly received and understood health promotion messages on CCS.

9 If possible, the authors could indicate weather the studies discussed actually measured reasons for a) attending/not attending screening or if they asked b) about perceived facilitators and barriers without assessing the actual behavior? In the case of a) it should be critically noted that possibly women are knowledgeable BECAUSE they went for screening and that it was not the reason for screening.

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.

I am able to assess the statistics

Quality of written English
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