Reviewer's report

Title: How Well Does Pre-service Education Prepare Midwives for Practice: Competence Assessment of Midwifery Students at the Level of Graduation in Ethiopia

Version: 1 Date: 24 March 2015

Reviewer: Lisa Kane Low

Reviewer's report:

Have tried to submit three times to no avail. Will keep trying.

Overall this is an important manuscript and provides a model for the assessment of midwifery training programs in developing countries that are working to promote access to midwifery care to increase skilled provider access for childbearing women.

Major Compulsory Revisions

There are some areas of duplication in the methods and results presentation. The role of men is one area that is duplicative in the reporting of results.

There needs to be a reference to the use of the abbreviation for the technical training institutions before the abbreviation is used.

Later in the discussion the authors refer to the assessment of pre-service education using a theoretical model by Johnson et al. Did the authors consider this model in the conceptualization of the assessment process of midwives? If so this should be addressed in the introduction of the paper and highlighted as the framework used. If it was not part of the conceptualization of the assessment process, then I should be reframed in the discussion section as another exemplar of work in this area instead of comparing and reporting new results on the issue of meeting ICM global standards.

A table of the standards for Ethiopian midwifery training would be a useful point of reference and could add to readers understanding.

The author must respond to these before a decision on publication can be reached. For example, additional necessary experiments or controls, statistical mistakes, errors in interpretation.

Minor Essential Revisions

Several of the items listed above fall into this category. There are some language items that need to be cleaned up but overall the presentation of information is clear and understandable.

The author can be trusted to make these. For example, missing labels on figures, the wrong use of a term, spelling mistakes.
Discretionary Revisions

The use of language like unacceptable is not ideal. Instead staying within the framework of describing what is learned in non-judgment language is the recommended approach. It would be better to provide a tone of evaluation vs making final judgments on the overall quality of training. For example, are the midwives making a difference in overall outcomes of care? Is there a reduction in the rates of maternal morbidity or mortality. Are the midwives able to meet basic normal delivery and emergency skill outcomes vs unique skills like vacuum aspiration? It seems that it would be important to not overstate the "lack of training" vs noting the need to improve training. Currently the risk is one of determining that the midwives are not worth the training but that is not a logical conclusion of this investigation since it does not link the actual outcomes of care to training but notes the deficiencies in performance of skills doing simulations.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

no conflicts of interest