Author's response to reviews

Title: Medical students are afraid to include abortion in their future practices: In-depth interviews in Maharastra, India.

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editor-in-Chief,

Please find enclosed our manuscript “Medical students are afraid to include abortion in their future practices: In-depth Interviews in Maharastra, India” by Susanne Sjöström, Birgitta Essén, Kristina Gemzell-Danielsson and Marie Klingberg-Allvin, which we would like to submit for publication as an original research article in BMC Public Health. We believe our article is of interest to the readers of BMC Public Health as it deals with an important aspect of maternal health: how medical education can influence attitudes toward abortion and potentially the availability of providers of safe abortion care.

The major finding of our study is that medical students in Maharastra believe abortion is illegal and are afraid to provide abortion care services, as they fear reprisal. Lack of understanding of the law, experiences from the clinical setting and tradition and norm in society influenced those attitudes. Many students agreed that nurses could be trained and perform termination of pregnancy. We show that improved knowledge of the legal framework, value clarification related to abortion, and training of clinical skills is needed to increase the probability that medical students’ will include safe abortion services in their future practices.

Using in-depth interviews we gained deeper insight about students’ attitudes and perceptions toward provision of abortion, use of medical abortion and task shifting in abortion care. Our findings constitute a rich and valuable addition to the existing literature, including our previous cross-sectional survey that found poor attitudes toward abortion care services among medical students in Maharastra, and provide a new dimension on how the complicated abortion and sex selection discussion in India negatively affects future providers thus creating a barrier to safe abortion access.

We have used the consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ) checklist to report the study.

All authors have participated actively in all parts of the study. Conception and design of the study: SS, BE, KGD, MKA. Data collection: SS. Analysis and interpretation of data: SS, BE, KGD, MKA. Drafting the article: SS. Critical revision for important intellectual content: BE, KGD, MKA. Final revision and approval: SS, BE, KGD, MKA. All authors have agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work and to the submission BMC Public Health.

The Ethical Trials Committee in Stockholm, Sweden approved the study: 2013/415-31/4. The Faculty of Medicine, Uppsala University and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) funded the study, Sida Contribution No.:540800470.
We confirm that this manuscript has not been published elsewhere and is not being considered by another journal.

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