Reviewer's report

Title: Disparities in the use of mobile phone for seeking childbirth services among women in the urban areas: Bangladesh Urban Health Survey

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Reviewer: Mary Mercer

Reviewer's report:

This article has many positive aspects.

- It's an important topic, given the growing importance of mHealth approaches, the importance of maternal health, and the vast reach of inequality in most countries
- It makes good use of an existing data set
- it has an adequate sample size, which seems to be representative of a broad population
- it links the use of mHealth for childbirth care with an equally important measure, postpartum and postnatal care
- The statistical methods seem appropriate

However I was somewhat confused by other aspects of the article and feel the need for substantial clarification if it is to contribute in an important way to the literature on mHealth in resource-poor settings (and the potential is there).

- First of all, it’s important to establish clearly, including in the title of the article, that this is urban Bangladesh. Some indication as to the proportion of the country that lives in urban or suburban and rural areas would be helpful in understanding the scope.
- My biggest problem with the article was, however, that I want to know more about the main outcome variable "seeking childbirth services." The authors acknowledge that they don't know outcomes, but we need to at least know what that variable means. Did the women call for transport? Call to have a practitioner come to their home? Call for information about what to do at home? Was it at the time of delivery? If there is no more information than just that one thing, "called for services" then that is a major limitation that must be somehow addressed.
- We also don't know from the text who the respondents were -- was their any time limit on when the "last pregnancy" occurred? Not only recall, but given the recent growth of mobile phone use, use of a phone in the greater past might be different than one in the more recent past. The methods section needs to include more information, even though it's been reported in greater detail already in previous publications. Also, the abstract identifies participants as women -- but I didn't see that in the text.

- Another important piece of data we need is to know the prevalence of mobile phone ownership and use in the survey area. That question may not have been asked in the survey, but at least estimates for urban and suburban areas are needed. Similarly, what are the SES differences in ownership/use? It's hard to make sense of the findings without knowing that. For example, were the rates of use lower for less educated or poorer women because they don't have access to a phone, or for other reasons?

- The introduction doesn't mention the fairly extensive mHealth programs that have addressed maternal care issues in Bangladesh -- for example the MAMA text messaging program, and the mCARE project. Would any of these have had an effect on the results of this study?

- A small point -- the introduction should use the term MMR accurately -- you are probably referring the maternal mortality ratio, not rate.

- On the tables:
  - I'd like to see the three subsample sizes in Table 1.
  - The description of Table 2 could be clearer -- for example, it tells me that two-thirds of the women were ages 20-29, not that they were 'more likely' to be aged 20-24. Religion was only significant for the Rest-urban group, not overall.
  - In Table 3 I don't see any important differences between Model 2 and Model 3 so maybe Model 2 could be left out. (Just a thought.)

- I'm confused by Figure 1 -- I'm not clear on what it's telling me.

- I think the discussion section would be somewhat different if the broader information I wanted to see can be included. More focused ideas on how the results of this study could be used to improve use of maternal care services would be very helpful, for example.
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?
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