Reviewer’s report

Title: On-site clinical mentoring as a maternal and new-born care quality improvement method: Evidence from a nurse cohort study in Nepal

Version: 1 Date: 13 Jul 2019

Reviewer: Fiona Nolan

Reviewer's report:

The authors have done an excellent job in addressing my comments- thank you. The paper appears much clearer. It is a nice study and describes an intervention of value.

The issue of endorsing the training/mentorship package without evaluating the impact on patients remains and would need to be addressed however.

Page 2

Line 12: delete second 'performed better'

Line 16: The detail as to how many in each group were SBAs is apparent in its absence. Please insert e.g. One hundred and ninety five (63.3%) were trained as skilled birth attendants, of which xxx were nurses and xxx were auxiliaries.

I would suggest that Lines 18-20 could be merged e.g. 'The clinical skill assessment scores increased significantly for each participant, and therefore for the group'.

Line 23: delete 'despite its limitations' as none have been outlined in the abstract, so not needed here.

I feel it is important to add to the conclusions 'Assessing evidence of impact on patient safety would be the next stage in evaluating this promising intervention'.
Line 7: Please add a reference for these data

Page 6
Line 8: 'As follows' should be followed by a semi-colon, not a full stop.

Line 21: The number of SBAs in each group is needed, as mentioned earlier

Page 11
Lines 1 and 2: The wording is strange her. Is there something missing? 'We did not find evidence that staff with higher nursing education than staff less educated or that nurses had better knowledge than ANMs.'

Page 13
Line 14: The interpretation of the results as 'both SBAs and non-SBAs improved equally in their knowledge and ability to demonstrate clinical skills ' appears to contradict line 5 'The greatest improvement was observed in the birthing centers (+80.7%) among SBAs (+72.3%)…'. Please clarify.

Lines 4-6: As all of the groups overlapped, a simple regression analysis would determine which was most affected.

Page 14
Please provide some commentary in the discussion as to the potential reasons for mentees achieving lower scores at the end of the programme, particularly those most likely to cause serious harm e.g. the 18.5% who demonstrated less ability to perform a vacuum delivery, or the 2.8% of the sample who appeared less skilled at resuscitating a new-born.
Line 8: Please include the converse too. As it stands it the lack of any commentary on the negative results appears disingenuous and detracts from the positive, rather than highlighting it.

Page 15

Line 18: Suggest recording to state 'This mentoring programme appeared to have greatest impact among….'

Line 22: Please reword this to indicate that it is your belief, rather than a fact: e.g. We strongly believe that this is due to the individual to individual approach used in the programme, which allowed mentors to tailor their input according to the needs of each mentee.'

Page 16

Line 4: No study 'proves'- so please reword this to state something like 'The lack of a control group means that we are unable to determine to what degree the changes in outcome are solely the result of the intervention'

Lines 9-10: This would be better in the discussion. It is an obvious next step in evaluating the impact of the programme, not a limitation. It is only a limitation if you say the programme increases patient safety, whilst you have not evaluated it.

Lines 11-17 are not limitations. I cannot see their relevance to the section or to the text overall.

Page 18

Line 18: Please include the caveat that the study did not measure impact on patient safety
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

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