Reviewer's report

Title: Frontline health workers as brokers: Provider perceptions, experiences and mitigating strategies to improve access to essential medicines in South Africa

Version: 2
Date: 24 June 2014

Reviewer: Bryony Dean Franklin

Reviewer's report:

I enjoyed reading this paper, it is generally well written and represents a useful addition to the literature. However I have made some suggestions below as to how it could be improved.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. I felt that the abstract was rather weak and did not do the rest of the paper justice. The abstract is arguably the most important part of the paper as this is the first, or only, part of the paper which most readers will look at. Specifically, brief details are needed of the ‘health providers’ (which?), as well as some information about the methods used for analysis. It would be helpful to explain what is meant by circular migrants. Where it is stated that unreliable transport affects access to medicines, I wonder if this should be “is perceived to affect...”. Is ‘piloted’ the right word in the conclusion?

2. The last sentence of the introduction should be a clearly stated objective (or objectives).

3. The interview guides, or some more indication of the questions asked, are needed to interpret the findings. One option may be to provide an example of one of the interview guides a supplementary material; or high level points could be presented in a box within the text.

4. Please state whether there was any quality assurance of the analysis, such as via discussion of the coding framework with a second researcher.

5. Page 16 line 368 – it is not clear what you mean about “interrogating the potential role of mobile clinics” – do you mean that you asked specifically about this in the interviews? If so I think this could be stated more clearly

Minor Essential Revisions

1. Please correct the typographical error 13, 5% in line 64 of page 4. I presume this should be 13.5%

2. I think there is a word missing on page 4 line 68 – should this be “department of health facilities’ [or similar]?

3. Please define abbreviations on first use – eg ARV and TB on page 4, ART on page 9 – or ideally avoid using abbreviations at all if not often used.

4. Page 5 line 93 – extra word “the’
5. Page 6 line 114 – you refer to figure 1, do you mean table 1?

6. Table 1 – please specify abbreviations used in the table so that it can be read in isolation

Discretionary Revisions

1. I felt that the discussion would benefit from sub headings to give it more structure, covering areas such as implications for practice, comparison with the existing literature, strengths and weaknesses, etc.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests