Reviewer's report

Title: A cross-sectional survey of emergency and essential surgical care capacity in a Central African country

Version: 2 Date: 25 June 2015

Reviewer: Ian Munabi

Reviewer's report:

while this is interesting work of surgical importance there are certain items the authors will need to address before moving forward.

major revisions:

1. This looks like the presentation of data from a pilot study. It would be nice for the authors to state this as so or expand the data set to actually cover a more representative part of the country. Unless most of the population lives in the area covered by the selected hospitals. The small sample introduces a selection bias that will require the changing of the title if the manuscript is to be kept in its current format.

2. Given the small sample size and the likert scale used on the tool I would consider reporting medians instead of means in the results section. See this article on this and other issues Jamieson S: Likert scales: how to (ab)use them. Medical Education 2004, 38:1212-1218

3. In table 1 if the hospitals were actually visited why give a range of beds 21-50 or 700-1000? Alternatively were the administrators not sure or a likert scale was used. Given this small sample I recommend giving the actual numbers. These could be obtained since the selected hospitals are said to be within reach.

4. For table 2 see comment number 2 above. I think medians are better as you cannot have a 0.65 of a surgeon? Let include all the data or delete the comment under table 2.

5. Table 3, I suggest inclusion of the actual numbers is more informative than mean percentage. For example 2/2 is the same as 1000/1000, that is 100%, in terms of surgical performance the hospital that does 1000 operations is definitely busier than the one that does only 2.

minor essential revisions:

1. I would consider changing figure 1 into a table.

Discretionary revisions

1. Please have a look at the reference format at the end.
Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

No competing interests to declare