Reviewer’s report

Title: Access to health care for persons with disabilities in rural South Africa

Version: 0 Date: 12 Jun 2017

Reviewer: Neha Batura

Reviewer's report:

This is an extremely well written paper, that can help fill an important knowledge and policy gap.

There is a clear motivation for the study and the authors present a fairly detailed review of literature.

However, there are some issues that need consideration:

1. Study sample:

   (a) A clearer description of the sampling strategy is required. How were households selected? How were disabled individuals identified? How were they matched to the controls? Were the controls living in the same households as the disabled individuals?

   (b) The authors exclude children under the age of 5. At what upper age limit was the sample restricted i.e. what is the age range of the individuals included in the sample?

2. Instruments: The authors write that the non-disabled individuals received a shortened version of the questionnaire that the disabled individuals received. How was this questionnaire shorter i.e. what questions were not asked of the non-disabled people and why? Could this loss of information between the 2 groups have an impact on the analyses?

3. Results

   (a) Lines 228-230. It would be helpful to have the figures for higher % in the text too, to complement the data in the figure

   (b) The multivariate regression model suffers from an omitted variable bias, that is leading to inaccurate results. First, there is no accounting for household wealth or poverty, which has an impact on a household's ability to access care. Related to this, there is no measure of
household size. Larger households that are also poor or vulnerable, may have a smaller pool of resources to allocate between household members. This too would affect the ability to access care. Further, there are no measures such as distance to a health facility, financial protection/ main sources of funding careseeking that could have an effect on the decision to see care, or physical access to care.

(c) There might also be some unobservable characteristics at the household level that impact access to care. As these are not accounted for, the estimates are likely to be biased. The authors could consider controlling for household level effects in their regression model. This is especially important for an individual with a disability who live in the same household as their matched control, or for an individual with a disability who lives with other disabled people in the same household.

(d) Which regression model do the authors use?

(e) The access to care might differ by the severity of the disability. Could the analysis be stratified by severity or could this at least be included as an explanatory variable in the regression model?

Are the methods appropriate and well described?  
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No

Does the work include the necessary controls?  
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

No

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?  
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

No

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

Quality of written English  
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable
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