Reviewer’s report

Title: Selling my sheep to pay for medicines - Household priorities and coping strategies in a setting without universal health coverage

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Reviewer: Benjamin Uzochukwu

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BMC Health Service Research
Scientific Review Report

(Selling my sheep to pay for medicine: Household priorities and coping strategies in a setting without universal health coverage)

TITLE AND ABSTRACT

The title is a true and concise summary of the article. The abstract contained a summary of the key elements of the study however the first sentence of the abstract should be rephrased, for example into "the neonatal period is the time of life with the highest risk of dying….. If the author still decides to retain this statement then they should justify why the neonatal period is the most dangerous period of life.

Line 3: For clarity, authors may wish to rephrase line 3 as "There is evidence that in Ethiopia there is good knowledge of effective neonatal healthcare interventions however utilization of these interventions have remained low and this is contributory to the neonatal morbidity and mortality in Ethiopia.

Line 21: Authors may choose to rephrase as "This had fatal health outcomes for the sick newborn"

The key word "impoverishment" was hardly mentioned in this study and may thus be ineffective in helping a researcher identify the article in a growing number of related articles.
INTRODUCTION
The research questions posed by the authors were easily identifiable and understood. This study is original and has provided more understanding into intra-household resource allocation and how families prioritize newborn health versus other household needs and their coping strategies for managing these priorities.

Line 8-15, page 6- Healthcare seeking and spending should be discussed in details with respect to the newborn. This puts the justification for this study in perspective.

Line 21-25, page 6- The Authors have not related these health outcomes (neonatal morbidity and mortality) to out-of pocket payments or shown any form of relationship between these health outcome and out-of-pocket payments from previous studies.

METHODOLOGY
The description of the Ethiopian healthcare system should be summarized, moved up to the introductory section and adequately linked to the subject of discussion.

The methods used in this study were suitable however the authors did not sufficiently describe them to allow for reproducibility.

Study area: This has not been clearly defined. Was this study conducted in an urban and rural community or semi-urban and rural community? What criteria were used to define these geographic locations?

Data Collection: The authors should make clear the total number of interviews and Focus group discussions each. What informed the total numbers of interviews and FGDs that were conducted? Were there any modifications to the study instruments in response to preliminary study findings? What criteria were used to ensure trustworthiness and credibility of data?

RESULTS
Line 23, page 12: The authors may wish to replace the phrase "complicated care seeking to hampered care seeking."

The authors should clarify if the quotes are individual or unanimous responses of the participants. The authors did not report observations made in patients' homes. The results from the rural and urban or semi-urban communities were not compared but were reported as if the study was done in only one geographic group.
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS
The relevance of findings were discussed in an unbiased manner however there is room for more supportive references. The conclusions drawn were directly from the results of this study.

GENERAL COMMENTS
The manuscript was well organized however this write-up could be improved and grammatical errors corrected. Some grammatical errors were noted in Line 26 page 10, Line 16 page 12, line 1, page 15.

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

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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:
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