Reviewer's report

Title: Determinants of internal migrant health and the healthy migrant effect in South India: a mixed methods study

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Reviewer: Jennie Gamlin

Reviewer's report:

This is a well written paper that describes and discusses the results of a mixed methods study of the health outcomes and their determinants of with families of internal migrants in India.

The methods are sound and well described and the authors discuss their meaning in the light of other research on internal and international migration. Important issues such as the existrence of not of the Healthy Migrant Effect is discussed as well as the social and other dynamics that may be influencing migrant health. In terms of study design and analysis the study is largely good. As the authors point out, there was not a direct relationship between migration and migrant health, but rather a series of crosscutting issues that the study raises.

Although there were some health outcomes that were worse among migrant population, these appear to be more related to the type of work, than to the fact of migration and this is where I find that the paper is weak. The evidence presented, at least the qualitative evidence, which is what I am best able to comment on, suggests that there may be other issues that were not raised in the paper, and so I find the title and objectives of the paper seem to be out of synch with some of the findings. While the main discussion does focus on the topic in question, this issue seems to me less of a 'threat' to migrant wellbeing than other issues that are not discussed. There are also missing background data about the population and interveiwees that might be interesting to include

For example, we do not know whether among the labourers there are child workers. Some of the interviewees speak of their 'sons' and it is not clear whether or not these are adults. There is also no mention of gender, and although the study does give lip service to the question of gender, this is virtually absent from data and discussion.

Secondly, many of the workers are clearly involved in extremely hazardous labour in brick kilns, carrying bags of cement and on a assembly line and this paper could also have been seated more firmly within a discussion of hazardous migrant labour. For example,are migrants more likely to be involved in hazardous labout than non migrants? What policy exists surrdounding these forms of labour? Are children involved in these forms of hazardous labour?
Third, an issue that is not mentioned but which is often a concern for migrant labour is the question of access to health care. This can in itself contribute to poor health outcomes for migrants. It would be good to know whether migrants used local health facilities and why access they have to local facilities.

Fourth, the question of social networks is raised, and their effect or not on wellbeing. These networks are not described. It is often the case that migrant labourers lack a good social network, so it would be interesting to know what sort of support exists and why this support is good for their health. This is one of the main conclusions but the paper actually says very little about it.

Finally, the discussion of the 'Healthy Migrant Effect' could have taken a more central stage in this paper. There is the general assumption that people will only migrate to something better than what they have at home. Some of the interviewees actually say that their health became worse while working as migrants. Again, this seems to be more an issue of the type of work than the fact of migration, but this whole question could be explored in far more depth.

Overall, I find this paper really needs to be making more bold and stronger statements about the relationship between internal migration and wellbeing. It may be the case that the data simply do not stretch to this and if this is the case then perhaps the authors could think of how to take a different angle on their analysis. I would also have appreciated more background data on context and population.

**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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I am able to assess the statistics

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