Reviewer’s report

Title: "It is good to take her early to the doctor" - mothers' understanding of childhood pneumonia symptoms and health care seeking in Kilimanjaro Region, Tanzania

Version: 0 Date: 10 Mar 2017

Reviewer: Andrew Scott LaJoie

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This is a thorough evaluation of mothers' perceptions and decision making practices regarding pediatric pneumonia symptoms in Tanzania. The authors employed a variety of qualitative interview methods with 4 different populations - young mothers, older mothers, mothers with recent experience with a child with pneumonia, and health care workers. Transcript analysis included translation and back translation and kept key terms in the native language. The conclusions differ from what has been reported elsewhere and reflect the study participants' knowledge and understanding of pneumonia.

Major suggestions:

1. Provide more information about the participants in the study. How many? What were their demographic characteristics? How many kids did they have (It may be the case that a new mother may be less prepared to cope with pneumonia than a mother with several older children)?

2. It would be helpful to readers for the authors to clearly identify if and when misconceptions were reported by the mothers. Did mothers report on symptoms that are unrelated to pneumonia? Did they under-report key symptoms?

3. It is difficult to assess the degree of "saturation" of themes reported by the participants. The authors could facilitate better understanding of the commonality of beliefs by using more descriptive terms ("often" "several" "rarely" "few") and/or by reporting more than one quote.

Minor suggestions:

1. On page 5, lines 6 through 8, the participant catchment area is described as coming from 80 villages randomly chosen from 34 villages. I suspect this might be a typo.

2. In several instances, the authors state "it was said by few mothers". Perhaps this could be better stated as "A few mothers stated ..." or "it was said by a few mothers".

3. Consider using "breastfeed" rather than "breast feed".
4. On page 16, lines 38 to 44, is this backwards? Do mothers move from traditional care to biomedical care as the symptoms move from mild to severe? Line 42 has this reversed.

5. On page 16, line 47, "mothers reported very limited use" instead of "mothers' reports of very limited use"

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

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.

Not relevant to this manuscript

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

Acceptable

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