Reviewer’s report

**Title:** Strengthening mental health systems in low and middle-income countries: the EMERALD programme

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 5 January 2015

**Reviewer:** Laurence Kirmayer

**Reviewer’s report:**

Review of Semrau et al.,

Strengthening mental health systems in low and middle-income countries: the EMERALD programme

This is an interesting brief report on an ambitious ongoing project to improve mental health care systems in 6 LMIC countries. The paper is clear and well-written and serves as a useful announcement of the work currently undertaken. The main issue is the lack of specific detail that would make the paper more interesting.

**Major and Minor Compulsory Revisions**

None

**Minor Compulsory Revisions**

1. In Box 1, some additional detail is needed to make the case study easier to follow. i.e.
   - "gap of over 90&" of what?
   - system barriers and facilitators -- for example what?

**Discretionary Revisions**

**Introduction**

1. P 1., paragraph 1: the definition of the health care system could acknowledge the importance of self-care and lay sectors – since this becomes a major issue in figuring the role of professional mental health services in diverse global contexts.

2. p. 2, para 2 The fact that ¾ of the global burden of disease due to MNS lies in LMICs has much to do with population, so the more apposite figure would be the % of disease burden in LMICs countries that is due to MNS.

3. Page 1, para 3, note that “appropriate” and evidence-based as not the same and probably should be linked by “AND”

4. Page 2, top, refers to “serious adverse consequences” of non-treatment occurring “often”, it would be helpful to have some estimate of how often this
might occur (as compared to serious untoward effects of treatment)

5. Page 2, the first mention of the Movement for Global Mental Health could have a reference

Activities and Methods

6. Para 1, refers to “innovative methods” — some mention of what these are would be of interest.

7. work is underway on “a large survey with household members) — Where? Using what kinds of survey instruments?

8. “key assumptions are being built into the tool” — what key assumptions?

Health System Processes

9. The evaluation of contexts of delivery refers to the analysis of key documents and of focus groups --- arguably on the ground ethnographic or other observational research would also be crucial to identify the gap between policy and actual implementation. Was this considered?

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests