Reviewer’s report

Title: Automated versus Physician Assignment of Cause of Death for Verbal Autopsies: Randomized Trial of 9374 Deaths in 117 Villages in India

Version: 1 Date: 14 Apr 2019

Reviewer: Chalapati Rao

Reviewer's report:

The authors have satisfactorily addressed my comments on the original version. Given the strong correlation between two independent physicians from this study as well as other previous studies, I recommend that this manuscript could revise its recommendation of compulsory dual physician review for all VAs. Dual physician review adds to costs and logistical challenges, and does not seem to offer that much of an advantage, as shown here. Instead, the manuscript could recommend analysis of specific causes which demonstrate divergence of cause of death assignment, and develop guidelines to promote greater consistency. Further, the recommendation could be revised to single physician review with a random sample review to check for agreement. This could start with a higher percentage - say 25% random re checking, then gradually brought down as agreement is systematically proven. Such strategies are essential to reduce workload and costs as VA implementation expands to cover larger populations in the developing world.

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?
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Not applicable

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
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Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
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I am able to assess the statistics
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