Reviewer’s report

Title: National guidance and district level practices in the supervision of community health workers in South Africa: a qualitative study

Version: 0 Date: 04 Jan 2019

Reviewer: Sofia Castro Lopes

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting article, focusing on the importance of the role of supportive supervision in the health system, and the translation of policies and guidelines into practice, in particular at the provincial and district levels. It also highlights the importance of community health workers in the primary health care.

Overall, the article is well written, clear and concise.

Minor comments follow regarding specific sections of the article.

Background

The objective written in the last paragraph of the Background should state that the study included two districts from one province in South Africa, as stated in the abstract.

It is not clear in the Background (nor in the methods section) if the policies and guidelines reviewed are national documents or if these are developed/adapted at the province or district levels.

Methods

In the abstract is mentioned that the North West Province was selected because this was an early adopter of the WBOT strategy. This should also be mentioned in the methods section. It could also be interesting to include the dates when the WBOT strategy implementation started at the different provinces and, specifically, within the selected districts.

It is not clear to me if the document analysis was based on a predefined extraction grid (based on a framework, for example; although it is mentioned some literature in the background section - ref. 27 and 29 it is not clear that this is followed in the analysis) or if the themes and sub-themes emerged from the analysis. Clarifying this would support the reader in understanding the findings.
Also, it is unclear if the document review (data extraction and analysis) was conducted by more than one researcher, as a measure to limit bias and increase accuracy. If so, I suggest adding this information in the methods section.

Discussion

Some questions that could be interesting to explore in the discussion: Do the authors expect this to be the case of other provinces, i.e., the same findings across South Africa? If policies and guidelines are developed or adjusted at the provincial and district level, could major differences be expected in the supervision process?

References

The citations and reference list require review for consistency and accuracy.

**Level of interest**

Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English**

Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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