Reviewer’s report

Title: A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF GUIDELINES USED FOR MANAGEMENT OF SEVERE ACUTE MALNUTRITION IN SOUTH AFRICA'S REFERRAL SYSTEM

Version: 1 Date: 08 Sep 2017

Reviewer: Hedwig Deconinck

Reviewer's report:

Title

Change title to 'care for referral', because the analysis of guidelines is focused on the referral system. This would better inform the reader the topic of the paper, and not have other expectations.

Page 3

Line 7/8: Remove the 2nd sentence as is redundant and confusing with the following sentence.

Line 17: Since you have introduced the SAM abbreviation above, remove "severe acute malnutrition" and use SAM consistently thereafter.

Definition of SAM is still incorrect (see the WHO 2013 guidelines update [1] and the SA operational guidelines [2]):

Since the transition from the NCHS to the 2006 WHO Child Growth Standards [3], the use of weight-for-height z-score < -3 (WHZ < -3) was agreed as indications of SAM for children 6-59 months [4, 5], along the MUAC <115 mm and presence of bilateral pitting oedema.

Page 4

Line 10 and throughout the paper: The reference to the WHO10-steps approach of the management of SAM in inpatient care [6] is very confusing. I suggest to provide a full description when the first time referenced, and next use the same abbreviation consistently. Also make it clear that the 2003 guidance (which the authors promoted for use in South Africa), covered inpatient care/hospital care only, and that the treatment approach has changed since the availability of a ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF) that made treatment in outpatient care possible, and adapted the diagnosis of complicated and uncomplicated SAM (children are clinical well and alert and with appetite-ie, passed the appetite test) as decision for referral to hospital care along other IMCI danger signs.

Page 16
Line 56, it is not the Lancet articles but the WHO 2013 Update that was decisive, change the reference [1]
Related comment: I am surprised there is no reference made to the WHO 2009 and 2013 updated Pocketbook of hospital care for children, as this was much used across Africa for SAM inpatient care [7].

Page 5
Line 13: Add in sentence *text*: 'in rural *hospital* settings

Correct references:
6 and 30 'World Health Organization'
4 and 24 'National Department of Health'

References


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