Reviewer’s report

Title: A Review of Kenya’s Cancer Policies to Improve Access to Cancer Testing and Treatment in the Country

Version: 0 Date: 04 Jul 2019

Reviewer: Mario Festin

Reviewer's report:

This is a very interesting article which looks at the country policies, and follows up on how these policies are enforced.

However, the paper needs to improve of the flow of the discussion and to clearly present how one part of the methodology and its findings lead to the next.

1. Abstract - Background. I suggest that the main objectives of the paper be enumerated as these would determine the results presentation and eventually the conclusions of the paper (Page 1 lines 20 to 22).

2. Abstract - Results section. This seems to focus on the survey and interview findings rather than what was found in the review of policies. (Page 2, Lines 28ff)

3. Introduction page 2 to 4. The burden of the problem is clearly presented in the first paragraphs at the beginning of the section. However, the section on the history of legislative actions and policies starting on page 2 line 54 seems to overlap with what is supposed to be the review of the policies section. This would be acceptable if the later section on results has a deeper analyses on each of the policy documents, especially on how it affects specific cancers especially those most prevalent in Kenya.

4. Study aims. There are three aims or "objectives" of the paper. However, it was not clear how for example looking at policies can actually identify barriers when these usually happen during implementation. (page 4 lines 77 to 80). The second aim was on documentingmodifiable policy factors (line 79) but the source of these were not described whether it was from the policy documents nor from the surveys. The third aim on developing policy recommendation was not clearly defined on how it was fulfilled, although some components of policy formulation such as stakeholder analyses were described, we don't know what actually took place. The latter part of the section (lines 83 to 86) seem to be a repeat of the first section.

5. Materials and Methods. I hope there was a framework that was described that clearly defined how the findings from the policy analyses contributed to the formulation of the policy survey and what ever happened after that. (page 4 to 5)

6. Materials and Methods - Section on stakeholder analyses (page 5 line 102 to 105. I hope there was clearer information on how these stakeholders were identified, which policies they contributed to, and what have they done more to help.

7. Summary of literature review findings: - Page 5 (lines 108 to 113). If these were cited from a previous paper, should this not be in the background section to justify doing this project?
8. Policy Analyses findings - (beginning apge 6) 3 Important documents were presented, but it would have been clearer if there was a description on how these three related to the many documents listed in Table 1, which comes later. The description of the three documents here could have been more informative, if they included key features (which they did), how the policy affects priority cancer programmes (as what is stated in the title), and what are the policy gaps, implementation issues or research gaps that were identified by the authors. While it was described a bit in the first item, it would have been more useful if these were presented for all three documents. A summary statement or table at the end of the discussion of the three papers - as this should properly lead to the key informant interviews section. Also some clearer description on the issues of testing and that of treatment.

9. Key informant interview (Page 8, lines 179ff). I would like to see why this part of the project had to be done, What were the gaps and issues identified in the policy analyses that made the authors need to do a survey? What questions did they ask? Why did they stop at 14 respondents and was there a reason they chose this number, and how did they select the respondents?

10. Page 9 Line 182. What is structural coding?

11. Page 9 Line 198ff. What was the purpose of the stakeholder analyses? Were they being asked how the contributed to the previous review or are we looking at developing new policy recommendations and we are convening a new stakeholder group. How were the present five groups identified and what was the bases for the grouping? While the paragraph generally lists what they are doing, the important question that should be asked is how much are they helping in influencing the policies made. Some of the activities seem to apply to cancer in general, but we hope to see more on how these actually affect specific priority cancer programs more clearly.

12. Discussion and recommendations. Page 11 Line 231FF. This seems to be a very substantial presentation of what are included in the policy, but is mixed up with what should be some of the recommendations already. There is a lot of epidemiologic data here which probably can also be used to determine why some of the policies were formulated. Again it seems to speak about cancer in general (and not focusing on testing and on treatment), with many citations not even directly relevant the country Kenya.

13. Increased Focus on Stakeholder Engagement Page 14 Line 301. The focus of this part of the discussion was not very clear and what was supposed to be the input of this activity. While it was describing what happened in the past, there was no description on what were the gaps or issues from the past, and what could be done to improve future activities. Also basically two types of activities were described when there should be more activities as far as stakeholders are concerned, especially in influencing policy development.

14. Decentralizing Services, surveillance and data (page 15 lines 322ff. This section is also not clear on how it relates to policies and how they are used. A few lines do mention how these affect activities (334 to 339) but not really changing policies.

15. Limitations Page 16 Lines 346ff). I believe it should generally focus on what were some of the questions being asked, but were not available or answerable from the various methodologies performed. I am also not sure if the cancer patients for example reflect the most common or most problematic ones from the country. (BTW, is there a formal cancer survivor's group in the country. This obviously would be an important stakeholder that should be included).
16. Conclusion. (Page 15 lines 358 ff). Generally when I look at conclusions, I go to the original objectives of the paper, see how the methodology addresses how to reach those objectives, check what the results say, and what are the conclusions for each objective. This was not clear in this paper. The statements on lines 360 and 361 give a statement reflecting a need by cancer patients when the authors themselves state that having a good representation from patients was a limitation. I also need to see where the statement about the need for costs reduction come from, as what we only saw were the various plans for financing cancer services when we were not clear about how severe access and financing of service were. Establishing county level cancer centers would have been better justified if a mapping of existing centers were described so that an equitable geographic distribution could be planned (as part of a policy program).

17. Table 1. This listing of cancer policies is most informative, but I propose to have a third column on what are the key features and gaps from each policy.

**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

**Declaration of competing interests**
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?
If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

I declare that I have no competing interests

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal