Reviewer’s report

Title: A qualitative study of community elders’ perceptions about the underutilization of formal maternal care and maternal death in rural Nigeria

Version: 0 Date: 01 Aug 2019

Reviewer: Adeniyi Aderoba

Reviewer's report:

I will like to appreciate the authors for their work in putting together this research manuscript.

Overview

Maternal mortality remains an important challenge in many resource-limited settings. Intersectoral collaboration is needed to reduce the global burden. This study is appropriate in Nigeria, a country with high maternal death burden, as it documents valuable views of "community elders" in reversing above-mentioned trend. Importantly, this has the potential to guide health policy reforms and future research.

Specific Comments

1. Study title - While the first part of the title i.e. "If something happens, it is not easy to rush the woman to maternity" potentially attract readers to the article, it does portray a very narrow outlook to the robust findings documented in this study. The authors may consider going with the more apt "A qualitative study of community elders' perceptions and beliefs about maternal death and underutilization of formal care in rural Nigeria"

2. Page 4, Line 18 - highest absolute number of maternal deaths in the "world"


4. Page 4, line 20 - "formal healthcare services" - explain term at first use and differentiate from informal

5. Page 4, Line 27-29 Insert reference …… 33% of Nigerian women have utilized formal postnatal care since 2003.

6. Page 4, Line 39 - "physical inaccessibility and financial inaccessibility" explain terms at first use. Is it used in the same context as "facility-based care" Page 5, line 50?

7. Page 5, line 22 - absolute or potential influence?
8. Page 5, line 33 - this has reduced the impact- please rephrase.

9. Page 6, line 42 - insert reference ……Nigeria has a total fertility rate of 5.42 (live births per woman)


11. Page 7, line 8-12. please explain why these communities were chosen.

12. Page 7, line 26- Explain term "locally accepted methods of communication"

13. Page 8, line 28 specify the local languages

14. Page 8, line 38 - Who were the facilitators? Did they speak local languages? Were they international researchers or local residents? Are they engaged in certain roles, locally, in government institutions, or funding agencies that might influence trust and affect power relationships? Are they the same as the investigators in line 31? Are there existing power dynamics that could affect the CC?

15. Page 9, line 36- knowledge of the content of the CC topic guide may improve this research. How was the CC topic guide developed? Was it piloted anywhere? This helps to give validity to the study findings.

16. Page 9, line 17 - Who were the translators? Please provide more information as it may have influence on the findings.

17. Page 9, Line 50- How were the final themes validated?

18. Page 10 Line 24 -26? Were there power relationships between male and female elders that could affect CC?

19. Page 10 -Ethics- How did this research consider compensation for study participants?

20. Page 11, Line 31- TBA… explain term and context at first use.

21. Page 11, 61 "collective laughter". How can this be interpreted in the context of this research?

22. Results - Many of the quotes have Pidgin-English undertones and they should be rewritten for clarity e.g. page 16, line 56. "I no go go farm"

23. Conclusions the authors should highlight what is novel or confirmatory in the findings reported. Overall, the authors have contributed a very important piece to knowledge.

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:

Needs some language corrections before being published

**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