Reviewer’s report

Title: Trends in maternal and neonatal mortality in South Africa: A systematic review protocol

Version: 1 Date: 29 May 2017

Reviewer: Gbenga Kayode

Reviewer's report:

This study protocol was designed to estimate trends in maternal and neonatal mortality in South Africa. This is a very relevant study that aims to reveal trends in maternal and neonatal mortality in South Africa. However, this study will require a major review before considering it for publication.

Introduction

1) The authors did not highlight why the two publications that estimated neonatal and maternal mortality got different results.

2) The authors should state what they will do differently in order to obtain accurate estimates of neonatal and maternal mortality.

Methods

3) The authors should change PubMed to MEDLINE

4) Since the authors are focusing on South Africa, African specific database such as AJOL should be considered.

5) The authors will need to improve the search syntax

6) The authors mentioned that the study will cover 1990 - 2015. The authors should explain why study published to date should not not be included since some of the authors can use data collected before 2015.

7) The authors should reference Convidence software.
8) The authors should define neonatal death, neonatal mortality, maternal death and maternal mortality correctly.

9) The authors mentioned that the risk of bias will be assessed by 4 criteria but they did not consider methodological issues such as sampling technique, data quality.

Minor comment

10) The authors should proofread the manuscript to correct the grammatical mistakes. For example the authors stated that “It is aims to provide the context for understanding inconsistencies in reported estimates of maternal and neonatal mortality by the institutional reporting”

Level of interest
Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article of importance in its field that should be highlighted to relevant networks

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Needs some language corrections before being published

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