Reviewer’s report

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

Version: 1 Date: 10 Jan 2019

Reviewer: Patricia McInerney

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this manuscript. MMRs and NMRs are important indicators of health and health care in any country and therefore this topic is of importance. I do have some comments in relation to this manuscript.

1. pg 4 - line 12, mention is made of subsequent chapters - is this one chapter of a larger document?

2. I note that the aim is to synthesise data for the period 1990-2015. Can this time period be justified? On pg 5 in lines 3 and 9, it is stated that no restrictions were placed on the date of publication - what is meant by this?

3. The background / reason for this review is to determine progress towards the attainment of MDGs 4 and 5 - it would be helpful for the reader if the actual goals were cited and what was being aimed for.

4. pg 6, line 2 - this is referred to as a qualitative synthesis - I do not agree that this is a qualitative synthesis; it seems to me to be a narrative synthesis.

5. pg6, line 5-7 - were there any instances in which a third reviewer was required?

6. pg 6, lines 12-14 - were there any instances in which a third reviewer was required.

7. pg 8 - I don't see a table showing reasons for study exclusions.

8. I think it is accepted in SA that MDGs 4 and 5 have not been achieved, but there is no indication of how well things have progressed or how far off the mark the attainment of the goals are.

9. the manuscript needs editing throughout.

10. is there any reason why the following databases were not searched: Stats SA; National Department of Health and WHO?
Level of interest
Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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

Needs some language corrections before being published

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No