Reviewer’s report

Title: Neonatal mortality in Ethiopia: A protocol for systematic review and Meta-analysis

Version: 0  Date: 21 Dec 2018

Reviewer: Jean Joel Bigna

Reviewer's report:

Major comments

1) Rationale. The study is well justified.

2) Objectives.
   a. The first objective is not clear. "to show the pooled estimate of neonatal mortality in Ethiopia". Will the authors investigate mortality per year? an incidence? a prevalence?
   b. The second objective is not an objective. It sounds as usual task in systematic review. I suggest to remove.

3) Inclusion criteria. Line 105-106. "…Ethiopia and should report the magnitude of neonatal mortality." What the authors consider as "magnitude". Please be more specific. Clearly state that you will focus on studies reporting factors, causes and neonatal mortality rate.

4) Search strategy. "Maternity and Infant care databases". Please specify that this is an Ovid database.

5) Data extraction and management.
   a. I'm not sure that testing the data extraction form with only one study will be sufficient.
   b. The Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) data extraction form is adapted for the "Review of Reviews" and not for original studies. Please consider revising (http://joannabriggs.org/assets/docs/jbc/operations/dataExtractionForms/JBC_Form_DataE_SRsRSs.pdf).

6) Quality assessment. Newcastle-Ottawa Scale is a generic tool that should be adapted for each review. Please submit for review the modified version with items adapted for this systematic review and meta-analysis.
7) Data synthesis and analysis.

a. Nothing was written on the meta-analysis of mortality. Please consider specifying which types of data will be pooled (prevalence or incidence?)

b. Please tell us whether you will consider trend analysis for mortality.

c. What will be threshold of p value in Egger test to consider publication?

d. The Trim-and-Fill adjustment should be considered only in the presence of publication.

e. Heterogeneity should be assessed by the chi-square test on Cochrane's Q statistic.

f. "If substantial heterogeneity is detected, we will use random-effects model…". I want to point out to the authors that the decision to use the random effect model or the fixed-effect model should not be taken following the presence or not of substantial heterogeneity results (authors should also define what they will consider as substantial heterogeneity). This decision should be based on pre-specified criteria before the analysis. For example, to choose a fixed-effect model, authors may specify, for example, that studies should have similar methodology, close population, same design, identical interventions/controls/exposures, and identical outcomes. If it is not the case, the random effect model should be considered and the heterogeneity reported. If the heterogeneity is significant (for example $P> 50\%$), then the authors in this case should conduct subgroup analyzes and meta-regression to investigate sources of heterogeneity.

8) Discussion. Provide the dissemination plan.

Minor comments

9) Lines 58-59. There is a repetition. "Seven thousand newborns die daily" = "Every day, about 7,000 newborns die".

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