

Reviewer's report

Title: Care for perinatal illness in rural Nepal: a descriptive study with cross-sectional and qualitative components.

Authors:

Natasha N Mesko (n_mesko@hotmail.com)
David D Osrin (davido@jncsweb.net)
Suresh S Tamang (mira@vianet.com.np)
Bhim B Shrestha (mira@vianet.com.np)
Dharma DS Manandhar (dsm@healthnet.org.np)
Madan M Manandhar (m.manandhar@info.com.np)
Hilary H Standing (H.Standing@ids.ac.uk)
Prof Anthony A Costello (a.costello@ich.ucl.ac.uk)

Version: 1 **Date:** 24 Apr 2003

Reviewer: Rose Kambarami

Level of interest: A paper whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Advice on publication: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the compulsory revisions

Title: Care for perinatal illness in rural Nepal: A descriptive study with cross-sectional and qualitative components.

Title

The title is adequate.

Abstract

The abstract is not adequate. It should display the following elements:

- Objective of the study
- Setting
- Study participants
- Study outcomes
- Study factors
- Results
- Conclusion

Study objectives:

The study objectives were:

1. To examine consultation strategies from the beginning of an illness to its end.
2. To describe the sequence of choices from recognition onwards
3. To look at the reasons for the choices.

Comments

I read this manuscript with great interest. It examines a period in life which carries the highest mortality in developing countries and this makes this type of study important.

The scientific nature of this research manuscript could be better displayed.
The research questions(s) is not clear and needs to be stated (compulsory revision).

The objectives should be better worded especially objectives 2 and 3 (e.g. objective 2 could read "To describe the sequence of choices for care from the onset of illness to...." The way these objectives are presently worded, it would be difficult to assess whether some of them are achieved at the end of the study because of measurement issues. They need to be better defined (compulsory revision).

Methods

This is a cross-sectional descriptive study which used both qualitative and quantitative methods.

The study site is adequately described.

There is need to clarify methods used in order to make this paper scientifically sound.

For the quantitative component of this study, how the study participants were sampled from the sampling frame is not clearly displayed and is said to have been presented elsewhere. This has made it difficult to assess the presence of selection bias in this population. This bias, if present, affects the internal validity of this study. There is need to indicate the selection process of study participants in the qualitative component. Furthermore how were the six VDCs selected from the 42. (compulsory revision).

The study variables and outcomes that would assist in measuring the achievement of objectives are not clearly stated (Compulsory revision).

Definition of terms e.g. prolonged labour, PPH, obstructed labour, at community level would be useful (Discretionary revision)

The questionnaire that was used to collect information was said to be structured but we are not informed whether it was validated, translated or pretested in any way. If it was based on face validity this needs to be stated.

The issue of minimizing inter-observer variability in the administration of the questionnaire is not dealt with (i.e. were the interviewers trained on how to administer the questionnaires). How many interviewers were there? What efforts were put in place to reduce observer bias if more than one observer was used.

Were there efforts to minimize information bias where, if the interviewer was not blinded, would ask more probingly those participants who had the outcome of interest?

Where did the interviews take place? Was this at household level or some other public place? Were there inclusion and exclusion criteria? (compulsory revision)

What was the recall period for the relevant information being collected? (compulsory revision)

In case of maternal deaths, who were the respondents? How valid was the proxy's information pertaining to events preceding maternal or perinatal death? Was there any assessment of the validity of the proxy?.

Results

What were the baseline characteristics of the men and women interviewed (compulsory revision).

It is not normal practice to start sentences with percentages (93% of women.....) Discretionary revision

Results are difficult to follow.

It would be easier to follow them if the study variables for each objective were clearly stated at the beginning and results are presented for each objective. From the results as presented, it is difficult to say whether the first and other objectives of the study were met (compulsory revision).

Presentation of tables does not follow the usual format. Titles of tables unclear(compulsory revision).

Discussion

It would be interesting to compare current findings with similar community based study findings conducted in neighbouring countries and internationally (Discretionary revision).

Limitations of the study are not discussed. What were the potential sources of bias and were there any efforts to minimize them?

Some of the results are presented in the discussion section.

Conclusions and policy implications

These are easier to follow if presented for each study objective. As it is, there are conclusions not related to what the investigator set out to do in the objectives. Conclusions not adequately supported by data (Compulsory revision)

Suggested policy implications need to be backed by scientific evidence of effectiveness.

General comments

There is need to strengthen the scientific soundness of this manuscript.

Manuscript needs to be re-written.

Competing interests:

None declared.