

Reviewer's report

Title: Medium and longterm adherence to postabortion contraception among women having experienced unsafe induced abortion in Dar es Salaam

Version: 1 **Date:** 29 January 2008

Reviewer: Amy Tsui

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Review of "Medium and Longterm Adherence to Postabortion Contraception among Women Having Experienced Unsafe Induced Abortion in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania"

This manuscript addresses an important area of reproductive health behavior for low-income settings, that of post-abortion contraceptive acceptance and continued use. The study has both quantitative and qualitative components, with the former enrolling 392 patients of which 347 accepted contraceptive services and following up 325 at 12 months, of which 191 were relocated at that time and another 134 lost to follow up. In the qualitative component, 10 married and 10 single women were interviewed in-depth.

The current version of the manuscript raises some questions about design and analysis and can also benefit from tightening the linkage between the quantitative and qualitative findings.

1. Background

It would be helpful to know more about the legal status of induced abortion in Tanzania, since stigmatization can affect post-abortion (PA) clients' willingness to participate and remain in the study.

In the opening paragraph, the WHO estimates can be updated with the latest (2005) figures, which are 533,000 maternal deaths in developing regions and 536,000 worldwide. This is available off the WHO website.

Similarly, the author(s) may wish to review/cite David Grimes et al. article on unsafe abortion in the Lancet series on sexual and reproductive health (October 2006).

2. The study sample attrition at various points from empathetic contact (n=760) to final 12 month follow-up (191) raises concern about selectivity bias. The authors do address this in Figure 1 and Table 1 but the statistically significant differences by young age (<19), marital status (single) and parity (0) carry significant implications for the findings. First, is there adequate power to test the hypotheses? Presumably the sample remains adequately powered after attrition for hypothesis testing. Selective participation and follow-up should be discussed in more detail in the Discussion section.

3. Why do the author(s) not test the pre- and post-abortion measures for statistical significance in Tables 2 and 3?

Also are the 12-month use measures in the tables calculated using survival analysis methods? Continuation rates usually are done this way, since it adjusts for censored observation and loss to follow up. At the one-year follow up, were women seen exactly in their 12 month or at varying durations and then asked about their use at the 12-month point in time? Also were they asked the reason for discontinuation and if so, why did the author(s) not include this information in one of the tables? It would link well with the qualitative study analysis.

4. Regarding the ethical clearance process, what safeguards were in place to protect the confidentiality of PA patients who were followed up at home? It seems that many young single females might have wanted to avoid public knowledge or disclosure of their abortion procedure.

5. While the qualitative commentary are interesting to read and enrich the quantitative findings, it's not clear why the author(s) elected to detail only the barriers and condom use themes, as opposed to the others mentioned in the description on p.5, e.g., woman's health after abortion. The selection protocols for the commentary should be spelled out more clearly. As there is no conceptual framework to this analysis, it is difficult to assess the reasoning for the shared commentary or the two themes (or headings).

6. Last para of p. 10 The highly localized and selective sample for this study warrant more caution about the findings than is shared presently. It would be wise to be more tentative in the discussion and closing paragraph.

What next? UNABLE TO DECIDE ON ACCEPTANCE OR REJECTION UNTIL REVISIONS MADE.

Level of interest AN ARTICLE OF IMPORTANCE IN THE FIELD

Quality of written English ACCEPTABLE; NEEDS EDITING FOR SOME TYPOS

Statistical review NO

Declaration of competing interests I HAVE NO COMPETING INTERESTS