Author's response to reviews

Title: Social autopsy for maternal and child deaths: A comprehensive literature review to examine the concept and the development of the method

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Author's response to reviews: see over
We are pleased to submit our re-revised, newly titled paper, “Social autopsy for maternal and child deaths: A comprehensive review to examine the concept and the development of the method” to be considered for publication in the special thematic series on verbal autopsy of *Population Health Metrics*. This was an invited submission, which is based on the oral presentation on social autopsy that I made at the “Global Congress on Verbal Autopsy: State of the Science” meeting recently held in Bali, Indonesia.

The re-revised manuscript responds to the latest concerns raised by the editors and journal referee. Please find our detailed point-by-point response to these concerns immediately below. We hope that our responses and the re-revised paper satisfy all concerns, and that we may look forward to publication of our paper in the special thematic series on verbal autopsy of *Population Health Metrics*.

Sincerely,

Henry Kalter

**Editors’ concerns and authors’ responses**

**Please change the title to reflect that it is a review focusing on social autopsy of maternal and child deaths (the current title is too broad)**

As requested, we have re-titled the paper “Social autopsy for maternal and child deaths: A comprehensive review to examine the concept and the development of the method.”

**There needs to be an emphasis in the abstract that this is a review**

This emphasis has been added to the abstract. The first paragraph is a general description of social autopsy. The second paragraph begins: “Through a comprehensive review of the literature, this paper examines the concept and development of social autopsy, focusing on the contributions of the Pathway Analysis format for child deaths and the Maternal and Perinatal Death Inquiry and Response program in India to social autopsy’s success in meeting key objectives.” We modified some additional wording throughout the text to maintain this emphasis. For example, the last paragraph of the Introduction and...
Background section was reoriented to move forward the sentence about the paper undertaking a comprehensive review.

Please either cut some of the descriptions about the various studies completely or move some text with details about individual studies to an annex (the table in the text already adequately summarizes all of the studies).

Previously, there were three locations in the paper that included such descriptions. On page 9, we have deleted the several sentences describing the study in Bolivia, and have retained only those passages describing general features that are important to the development of the global social autopsy method. On page 10, we have done the same for the Guinea study. Finally, on pages 15-17, we deleted most of three paragraphs describing the MAPEDIR study in India. We retained only those parts that describe how the MAPEDIR program illustrates one of social autopsy’s two purposes, which is to empower communities to participate and engage health programs to increase their responsiveness and accountability.

In the conclusion, you need to add text that recognizes that the technique of social autopsy is still in development

The last sentence of the Conclusion has been modified to read: “Further development of the social autopsy method and development and wide-scale adoption of standardized tools based on the Pathway to Survival and three delays models will promote social autopsy's overall objectives of providing evidence on failures in the pathway to survival and increasing awareness to empower communities and engage health programs in the battle against child and maternal mortality.” We also added text to the Discussion section that prepared the way for this conclusion, describing other aspects of the SA method that are still in a developmental stage. For example, we pointed out that, in addition to the need to develop a standardized SA format, there is also a need to develop a standardized data analysis plan. And we concluded the Discussion with the new sentence: “These efforts will be enhanced by further work to develop the social autopsy method, such as identifying ways to minimize the stigmatizing effect of certain questions and assessing the optimal model for combining or sequencing the verbal and social autopsy interviews.”

Referee’s concerns and authors’ responses

The title should include the term 'maternal and child deaths'; to indicate to the readers about the specific focus of this article.

As requested, we have re-titled the paper “Social autopsy for maternal and child deaths: A comprehensive review to examine the concept and the development of the method.”

The manuscript should reference the seminal article on the analytical framework for the study of child survival in developing countries; by Mosely and Chen in 1984. This authors should briefly describe how their work has built on the original framework proposed by Mosely and Chen.

The new third paragraph of the Introduction and Background section reads: “Similarly influenced by Mosley and Chen’s 1984 framework for the study of child survival in developing countries, which posited a set of socioeconomic determinants underlying and operating through proximate biological factors to affect mortality [4], child survival strategies in the 1990s evolved in the same direction towards integrated approaches and an appreciation for the importance of household and community factors in health promotion, disease prevention and treatment. This culminated in the development of the “Pathway to Survival” framework in 1995 [5]. In response, social autopsy efforts for fatally ill children
emerged that holistically track the entire process and determinants of health care provision, careseeking (or not) from home to facility, and the quality of care provided.”

There are several references which are in the form of reports - e.g. the BASICS reports; RACHA; the Guatemala study report etc. The manuscript should provide weblinks to these reports, for interested readers to access them easily.
We have added weblinks for all the reports in the references section.