

## **Reviewer's report**

**Title:** Information needs of health workers in developing countries - a literature review with a focus on Africa

**Version:** 1 **Date:** 18 June 2008

**Reviewer:** David Morley

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Report on:

Information needs of health workers in developing countries – A literature review with a focus on Africa.

by

Neil Pakenham-Walsh and Federick Bukachi.

From a Medline search the authors identified 149 papers of which 35 were highly relevant.

In the abstract authors suggest the nub of it's findings

“ . . . . . a gross lack of knowledge about the basics how to diagnose and manage common diseases going right across the health workforce; and often associated with a sub optimal ,ineffective and dangerous health care practices . . . . . ”

Where important steps have been made they are directed at the 'upper echelons' of the health profession research and tertiary care (those likely to migrate) and relatively little for the health care provided at primary and district level ( those unlikely to migrate who are most in touch with poor)

Health workers relied on journal both local and those from Europe and North America rather than books, which suggests the books may be out of date. The need for material in the mental health field was confirmed in many of the studies.

National and other guide lines in the management of diseases need updating. The failure to follow guidelines is most apparent in the management of children with severe malnutrition in which the case fatality rate was 32% where if guidelines are followed a fatality rate of under 5% should be expected.

An unexpected finding was that in health units using generic drugs the standard of prescribing was better.

A finding emphasised by Cicely Williams 7 decades ago was confirmed that health education is listed and acted on when it is provided by those directly concerned with providing health care.

Acceptance. This paper should be accepted without revision. The paper bring out why there has been little progress in reaching the MDGs and many of the difficulties that have to be over come.

Level of Interest. This is to me an exceptional article and its contents studies by all those concerned in the gap between health in industrial and less priviliged countries.

The abstract of its content or a shortened version need to be widely disseminated.

Quality of written English. Excellent.

**Level of interest:** An exceptional article

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.