Background
Pay for performance (P4P) is a purchasing mechanism that provides funds to health care providers based on the achievement of pre-specified performance targets, with a view to improving the quality of health services and enhancing service coverage. Despite the roll out of such schemes across a range of low and middle-income countries, the evidence base remains limited. In particular, we lack an understanding of the pathways through which P4P results (or not) into outcome changes, for instance through improved resourcing, more functional accountability mechanisms, and/or improved motivation of health workers.

Purpose of the research
The overall aim of the study is to better understand how P4P affects health facilities with different characteristics and achieves outcomes in Pwani region of Tanzania, where a pilot P4P scheme has been implemented since 2011. It will examine the effect of P4P on the functioning of accountability mechanisms within the health system, and on facility resourcing (drugs, supplies and equipment availability) and resource allocation. This will enable researchers to test possible mediation pathways through which P4P results in changes in outcomes.

The research will be conducted prior to a phased national roll out of P4P in Tanzania. It is hoped that the key findings of the study will shape the roll out process to maximise positive impacts of P4P on population health.

Study methods
The study draws primarily on data collected as part of an evaluation of P4P in Pwani region of Tanzania, and involves further analysis of these data. Available data include surveys with households, patients, health workers and facilities conducted at two points in time in all intervention districts and selected comparison areas with no P4P. It will also draw on in-depth interviews and focus groups carried out with a range of implementers during three rounds of data collection.

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