Reviewer's report

Title: Maternal and perinatal factors associated with hospitalised infectious mononucleosis in children, adolescents and young adults: record linkage study

Version: 3 Date: 11 December 2010

Reviewer: Sally Glaser

Reviewer's report:

The authors have worked carefully to address my comments. I feel the paper is improved and is more thorough in the way it treats both the underlying issues at hand and the interpretation of the data. There are still places in the manuscript where it might help to define IM as "hospitalized", e.g., the first sentences of the Methods and the Results. Also, for the new Table 5, it might be helpful to include statistics regarding the significance of difference for each of the given contrasts.

I could envision that the association of IM based on hospitalization with mother’s marital status is essentially sociological, i.e., might reflect the difficulties a single mom might have in getting her child to the hospital, especially for an illness that does not present as life-threatening. Given that the authors choose not to speculate about such possibilities, it seems a little strong for them to recommend that this is an area requiring further research. Along a similar vein, is it possible that the association of IM with lower social class reflects a greater tendency of the less affluent to use hospitalization as a medical resource? This may not be a reasonable explanation for such a finding in the UK, given national health care.

On page 7, there is an incomplete sentence: "None of these excluded babies who had a subsequent record of IM."

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.