Reviewer's report

Title: Epidural analgesia and Cesarean delivery in multiple sclerosis: the italian cohort study

Version: 1 Date: 30 September 2012

Reviewer: Nora Fernandez Liguori

Reviewer's report:

This paper addresses an interesting topic in the field of pregnancy in multiple sclerosis and adds experience and results to data already described in the literature.

a) Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The question posed by the authors is well defined in the abstract but not in the introduction. Objective: to assess the impact of EA and CD in postpartum relapses and disability. Disability does not appear in the introduction.

2. The title does not accurately convey what has been found, it would be better to say "epidural analgesia and cesarean delivery in multiple sclerosis postpartum relapses: the Italian cohort study."

3. Clearly define how long the follow up is (every 6 months during pregnancy or postpartum?)

4. There is no description how the sample size for the primary objective was calculated. If no sample size was estimated, it should be informed the power achieved with this sample size.

5. Describe the clinical and therapeutic data obtained from a standardized form.

6. Clearly define each independent variable and cofounders

7. Clearly define in methods when the baseline EDSS was assessed. It appears in the statistical analysis as EDSS at conception, is it the same as baseline EDSS?

8.
Section Results last paragraph: On the whole CD was applied in 155 patients (44.4%). Sixty-five patients (18.5%) underwent EA (for analgesia in 19, for CD in 46 subjects). Which type of anesthesia did the remaining 109 patients with CD receive?

9.
Table 1: A trend was observed towards a high proportion of exclusive breastfeeding in patients with NEA (not reported in the manuscript).

10.
We emphasize the need of power estimation to support the conclusions.

11.
As there is no mention of sample size calculation it is not possible to exclude a low power to detect differences between groups.

12.
One limitation to consider is the possible bias of 10% of patients that not complete the follow up.

13.
There is no mention of unpublished data

b) Minor Essential Revisions

1. Legend in table 1: describe symbol #

2. Legend in table 2: describe symbol #

3. Table 1: insert symbol # in row 1: column 6 CD and column 7 NCD

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

Nora Fernández Liguori has received honoraria as scientific advisor from Biogen Idec, Novartis Biosidus and Argentina; she has received honoraria for participation as a consultant from Genzyme Argentina SA.; she has received speaker honoraria from Merck Serono Argentina, Biogen Idec and Abbott.; she has received funding for travel to national and international congresses from Abbott, Biogen Idec, Teva Tuteur, Biosidus, Merck Serono Argentina, Bayer Schering, and Novartis Argentina.