Reviewer's report

Title: The Purple Line as a Measure of Labour Progress: A longitudinal Study

Version: 1 Date: 26 July 2010

Reviewer: Sara Wickham

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for inviting me to review this paper, which is an interesting and well-written report of a study which I believe is of importance in its field. The study is appropriately contextualised within the existing literature and the methods used are appropriate to the study question. The discussion and conclusions are justified by the results of the study and the authors have discussed the limitations of their study as well as making useful suggestions for future work.

All of the suggestions below are discretionary revisions.

1. It is my understanding that the term “longitudinal study” generally implies a study which has continued for a longer period of time than has been the case here. I appreciate that there is a desire to emphasise that the purple line has been studied throughout the duration of women’s labours, but I feel that the use of this term may imply a longer duration of study. It is possible that this term might have been used, in part, as a pun on the geographical direction of the purple line itself; if this is the intention and the authors wish to retain this in the title then I wonder if it should be placed in inverted commas?

2. While the writing is of a high standard, I have noted a few possible typographical errors during my reading and offer the following for consideration by the authors:

On page 4 in the paragraph beginning “Guidelines from the Royal College of midwives...”, should “loosing” say “losing”?

In many places the word “VEs” contains an apostrophe that I am not sure is needed.

On pages 6 and 7, I am not sure that “1970’s” and “1980’s” need apostrophes.

Page 8, paragraph beginning “A number of midwifery textbooks...” – there is a capitalisation of midwifery near the end of this paragraph which may not be necessary.

Page 12, paragraph beginning “An independent...” there is an extra closing bracket at the end of one set of results that is not present in the other; I think it would be helpful to have consistency here.
Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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.