Reviewer’s report

Title: Use of antenatal care services in Kassala, eastern Sudan

Version: 1 Date: 17 May 2010

Reviewer: Birgitta Essén

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Although routine ANC has the potential of directly reducing maternal mortality through early detection and taking measures to address such complications as placenta previa or preeclampsia most complications causing maternal deaths first occur during or after childbirth. The effectiveness of ANC in reducing maternal mortality is therefore thought to be limited. The effectiveness of ANC in reducing maternal mortality is thought to be limited Bergsjö P. In: de Brouwere V, Van Lerberghe W (eds). Safe motherhood strategies: a review of the evidence., 2001. Consequently support for ANC as a strategy to reduce maternal mortality has diminished, and today ANC is mostly regarded as contributing to general maternal health and the survival of infants. Nevertheless, it can be hypothesized that attending ANC has an impact on the utilization of other kinds of maternal health care, including emergency obstetric care.

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
The aim could be more clear. The poor evidence that maternal mortality is related to ANC could be discussed and what are the evidence for Safe motherhood programs. It is not an original study but of interest of the area and especially for the circumstances within the region.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
There is a lack of definition of variables and setting. ANC is free of charge? Any insurance system?

3. Are the data sound?
yes

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
yes

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
Yes but further references could be add

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
The authors should explain what they mean with “technical problem “ when it comes to measuring social and economical status. How come that they could measure education but not social status. Distance to ANC known?
7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?

Yes but more could be added: The relationship between ANC and maternal outcome is generally confounded by socio-demographic factors such as education, residence, and age. Carrol G et al . 2001, Rööst et al , Bjog 2009.

It is six times more common in low-income countries for women who had at least one ANC visit to give birth within the formal health care system and several studies have found that low attendance to ANC is related to a higher risk for maternal mortality WHO 2003, Hounton S et al, 2008, Taguchi N et al, 2003

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?

yes

9. Is the writing acceptable?

Yes but a bit poor

**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'