Reviewer’s report

Title: The role of hospital midwives in the Netherlands

Version: 1 Date: 16 September 2010

Reviewer: Eileen Hutton

Reviewer’s report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this interesting paper reporting on an important aspect of care provision in the Netherlands. I have a few minor suggestions for the authors, and one question requiring clarification, which may impact one observation and conclusion in the study.

1. Major compulsory clarification: is the decrease in the percentage of instrumental births that is reported over the time period under study the percentage using the total number of births in secondary care, or using all births in the country? If it is births in secondary care (as I suspect it may be) then the percent decrease may be explained by an overall increase in the proportion of births taking place in secondary care. If the rate of assisted birth was static across the entire population, and the rate of births taking place in hospital increased, and all assisted births take place in hospital the denominator will grow and the numerator (assisted birth) will be static resulting in a decrease in the percent. Thus if the rate of assisted birth is to be commented on it should be done in the context of all births not only the births in secondary care in order to reach the conclusions around care provider.

Discretionary Revisions:

1. to improve clarity of writing suggest under results first sentence “The number of births delivered by midwives in secondary care increased from 8.3%...
2. there are a number of small edits that will improve English, eg. less risk-full = lower risk
3. The third paragraph under statistical analysis is actually part of the findings.
4. the definition of assisted births provided on page 9 should be given the first time this term is used.
5. table 1 it might be helpful to inser the % of births that the number of children born in secondary care constitutes as part of the total births nationally. (as a bracketed item beside the column giving the number).... in this table "else" may read better as "other".

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable
**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.