Reviewer's report

Title: Differences in relative risk of stillbirth among women of different regions of origin compared with women from Germany: an analysis of the German perinatal database, 2004-2007

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Reviewer: Rhonda Small

Reviewer’s report:

This manuscript is well written and presents important data on stillbirth among immigrant women compared with non-immigrant women using national perinatal data for Germany. The four years of national data ensures sufficiently large numbers of stillbirths for robust findings. The analyses are carefully presented and the findings are well described and discussed in the context of other relevant studies. The study’s strengths and limitations are also clearly identified.

Major compulsory revisions

None

Minor Essential Revisions

1. The Gissler et al review referred to on page 3 did not investigate ‘ethnic’ differences but differences between international migrant populations and non-immigrant populations. This need sot be made clear.

2. The comment that immigrant women had an appropriate number of ultrasounds (3-4 scans) perhaps needs a comment about practice in Germany, as 3-4 scans is not standard in other places, nor is there an evidence-base to support multiple scans.

3. Some proposed typographical and/or language changes are:
   - ‘obstetrics’ rather than ‘obstetric’ when used to mean the discipline of obstetrics; and ‘obstetric’ rather than ‘obstetrical’ when used as an adjective; also, maternal ‘characteristics’, rather than ‘characteristic’.
   - the word ‘autochthonous’ is used very rarely in English to my knowledge, and when used refers to the Indigenous populations or original inhabitants of a country, not quite the meaning intended here I think. It might be better to refer to the ‘non-immigrant’ population instead.
   - ‘un-learned’ worker would probably be more usually described as ‘unskilled’ worker; and ‘offician’ as either ‘office worker’ or ‘white collar worker’, I think.
   - under Maternal morbidities (p6): ‘showing partly a considerable non-response’ might be better phrased: ‘but data quality are poor’ or ‘with a large amount of missing data’. I think it needs some re-phrasing to make the meaning clear.
- ‘pronouncedly’ could be replaced by ‘significantly’.
- ‘anamnestic’ data (p11) is not commonly used and could be replaced with ‘obstetric’ or ‘obstetric and medical history’ data.
- ‘extensively’ might best be replaced by ‘confidently’

Discretionary Revisions

An addition the authors might also consider for the Discussion:

One of the common problems for studying perinatal outcomes in immigrant populations, acknowledged appropriately by the authors, is the absence of migration-specific data in routine datasets, as occurred here where region of origin was identified, but individual maternal country of birth was not. And there is rarely data available on other potentially important factors, such as fluency in the receiving country language, type of migration (skilled/voluntary, forced migration/refugee/asylum seeker or guest worker), or length of residence post-migration. I think the Discussion could include some recommendations about the importance of better migration indicators in routine perinatal data collections to increase the availability of relevant data variables to enable more nuanced analyses of perinatal outcomes in immigrant populations.

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