Reviewer’s report

Title: Maternal Obesity Support Services: A qualitative study of the perspectives of women and health care providers

Version: 1 Date: 29 August 2011

Reviewer: Debbie Smith

Reviewer’s report:

Review:
1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?

I am not sure why only obstetricians and midwives were approached to take part in the study when the paper refers to ‘health care providers’ – there are other disciplines providing health care to women with a BMI of 30 or more (e.g., sonographers). It is also not clear what the role of the ‘Monday clinic’ played in this study – was it being evaluated?

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?

I am unsure why decided to use focus groups instead of interviews – views towards obesity and your experience of maternity care are personal so I wondered what the justification for focus groups was. Would results have been different if interviews were used? Did demand characteristics have any role to play in their answers in the focus groups?

3. Are the data sound?

Yes, the process of analysis is clearly defined.

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

I was surprised to see so much detail in reference to the recruitment area and clinic – if the women and the midwives all attend or work at the Monday clinic are they not identifiable?

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?

Yes.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?

The limitations are addressed. However, no suggests are given as to why no obstetricians took part in the study – this is important as guidelines for maternal obesity outline the need for consultant-led care. It is unclear if all the women were attending the ‘Monday clinic’ as this would be a limitation as they will be received tailored care which needs to be identified more clearly in the discussion.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
Yes.

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

9. Is the writing acceptable?
Yes.

Full review:

I enjoyed reading this manuscript. This topic is one of great interest to all health professionals delivering maternity care and commissioners of maternity services. My own research team has recently conducted some similar research which we will be looking at publishing in the next few months so I was very interested in your results. I think this paper gives us some insight into the needs of pregnant women with a BMI #30kg/m2 in one area of England and the experiences of the midwives in this area in delivery maternity care. My detailed comments are below under the suggested headings:

• Discretionary Revisions (which are recommendations for improvement but which the author can choose to ignore)

The demographics of the 13 participants that you report as a result of observations do not tell us anything of importance so could be removed. See below for a suggestion of information that I think should be included.

Some more information about the ‘Monday clinic’ would be interesting – it is unclear and a bit confusing as to whether the women attended this clinic and if the midwives worked there. Therefore, I am left unsure as to what the role of this clinic has in this exploratory study (it is not mentioned in the aims but is outlined elsewhere in the methods section and is touched upon in the results section).

I feel that the implications for clinical practice could be a bit more defined and reference to the ‘Monday clinic’ made. I have no doubt that midwives will be interested in these findings and how they can apply what has been found here in their clinical practice. For example, you mention behavioural change, this is a new concept to most midwives so some more information on ways in which they can include these techniques into their clinical practice that are based on the results would be a good addition (don’t know if this is possible but would be interesting!). Another example is page 19, what can be done by midwives to increase motivation? Another example is page 20, how can they be more aware of psychosocial impact of obesity on women and do women want to discuss this with their midwife? You mention knowledge in your implications – how do the 2010 UK guidelines on weight management from NICE, CMACE and CMACE/RCOG impact on the knowledge of midwives and women in terms of maternal obesity?

In the discussion, you talk about social isolation as being associated with obesity. Social exclusion and isolation are also associated with deprivation so this may also be a contributing factor to these feelings expressed by the women and
should be mentioned.

• Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

The following terms need to be corrected to be consistent throughout the paper;
- you currently use BMI of 30 or above, >30, 30+ and #30. You should really use the term BMI #30kg/m2.
- you use the term ‘healthcare providers’ and health care providers’.

It is a little unclear as you refer to ‘healthcare providers’ throughout the paper but only have data from midwives. This is slightly misleading as maternity care is provided by many more people than just midwives. I feel this should be changed to midwives or outlined clearer when used the first time.

It is a little unclear if the women who participated / midwives had attended / worked at the ‘Monday clinic’ – this detail is important when interpreting these findings.

The results section is a bit confusing at times when you are referring to ‘the women’ – at times it is clear if you are referring to the participants in the study or pregnant women with a BMI #30kg/m2.

• Major Compulsory Revisions (which the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

None.