Reviewer’s report

Title: Birth registration rates in New South Wales

Version: 1 Date: 20 August 2012

Reviewer: Ashna Mohangoo

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The authors compared rates of birth registration in NSW and explored factors associated with the registration rate. They compared birth data registered by parents in the RBDM with data registered by midwives or other healthcare workers at birth in the MDC. The MDC consistently reports more live births than the RBDM.

Major Compulsory Revisions

(i) The inclusion criteria for MDC is from 20+ weeks of gestation or 400+ grams birth weight. These inclusion criteria are at the limit of viability. Have the authors considered the fact that parents of babies that died in the perinatal period, especially (early) neonatal deaths following live birth will have a higher risk of non-registration?

(ii) The reported risk factors for non-registration including maternal age less than 25 years or 40 years and over, a birth weight less than 2500 grams and a gestational age less than 37 weeks or at or after 42 weeks, are all major risks factors for death in the perinatal period. The authors should consider studying rates of registration and factors associated with the registration rate after excluding babies that have a substantial increased risk of mortality after live birth. These results might give new insights and conclusions and should be discussed in the paper.

(iii) The methods section is incomplete. The authors should clearly define the risk factors/groups in the methods section.

(iv) Results section: the authors indicate that missing values on residence of NSW were excluded, 93 from MDC compared with 625 from RBDM. Did the authors test the significance of difference in excluded data?

(v) The first part of the results section about exclusion of records because of duplicate records, incompleteness, residents of other states and missing values on residents should be included in the methods section.

Minor essential revisions

(i) Results section: it is stated twice that 61 records were excluded from analysis because of incompleteness.

(ii) Could the authors explain what is meant by “Checked by 1,000 person IDs
selected at random, the false positive rate of the linkage was 0.4% and false negative <0.1%.

(iii) Results section of the abstract: authors should include adjusted odds ratio's.

(iv) Include abbreviation for New South Wales (NWS) on page 4: “In New South Wales (NSW), the percentage difference between…”

(v) Use NSW instead of New South Wales on page 4: “In 2004, the differences were 6.7% in NSW, 6.3% in Queensland, …”

(vi) More than half should read over 60% on page 7: “Babies from the risk groups accounted for 46.54% (198,761) of all live births, but accounted for more than half (63.09% (22,091)) of the non-registered births.”

(vii) Odd ratio should read odds ratio on page 9: “Table 3 shows the adjusted odd ratio of factors associated with non-registration of births.”

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.