Reviewer's report

Title: Clinical decision-making: midwifery students' recognition of, and response to, post partum haemorrhage in the simulation environment.

Version: 2 Date: 12 September 2011

Reviewer: Helen Cheyne

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for inviting me to review this very interesting paper. The topic of how midwifery students respond to emergency situations is both topical and relevant both to midwifery practice and education. The methods used in this study are appropriate, use of hypothetical scenarios followed by interviews while reviewing video recordings is well established for investigating decision making in a range of emergency and other settings. The aims of the study are clearly stated and the methods and data analysis are well described in some detail.

Major compulsory revisions

However, I do not think that this paper currently draws the maximum value from the study which has been conducted, I think that it currently undervalues the study considerably. A sample of 35 students is quite large for a decision making study and the use of video analysis of what was actually done by the students along with the follow up interviews provides the opportunity for a much more developed section in the results and discussion about how the students were actually making decisions.

The 1st research question is - How do student midwives make decisions and respond to an obstetric emergency?

The first part of the results describes how the students respond to the emergency - what they actually did. This is very interesting although there is some crossover between the description of methods and the results. For example table 1 is discussed in the methods but not in the results. The table itself could do with more clarification as it contains very interesting and relevant information but it is not used to its best. It may be that it is included to describe the method of data collection rather than the results however, the various times that the students called for assistance is interesting. I feel that the second part of the results is less well presented and much more could be made of it. In the methods the student's (10) response to PPH is to be discussed under key clinical management strategies, however I am not able to find a section in the results or discussion entitled key clinical management strategies. Further the results presented here relate only to one student (33) given that 35 students took part this seems very restricted and not enough to determine that the students were using inductive or deductive reasoning or something else such as intuition. Coiffi has investigated midwives response to haemorrhage and concluded that heuristics were dominant. It may well be that the student midwives were using a more rational
approach to the decisions they made but the data presented here doesn't support either way. I feel that this is an important study and that the authors should restructure the results section to include much more data on the way in which students made their decisions - this would maximise the value of their chosen study method. I would also suggest that they include in the background section some discussion of the various theories of decision making. I feel that this would then inform their presentation of results.

**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' below