Reviewer’s report

Title: Cocaine use during pregnancy assessed by hair analysis in a Canary Islands cohort

Version: 2 Date: 18 July 2011

Reviewer: Simona Pichini

Reviewer’s report:

Since the principal information given by the submitted paper is the consumption of drugs of abuse during pregnancy in Canary Islands, the authors should focus on this study aim and describe how these data can be used for purposes of general health strategies.

Thus the authors should:
- better define the aim of their investigation;
- shorten the description of analytical methods;
- focus their discussion on the significance of presented data for health and policy scopes;

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined? see above
2. Are the methods appropriate and well described? see above
3. Are the data sound? yes
4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition? yes
5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data? yes
6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated? yes. Explain in the introduction and repeat in the discussion the choice of hair samples instead of meconium samples.
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 Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?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? yes
9. Is the writing acceptable? yes

Major Compulsory Revisions:

In details:

ABSTRACT: in the conclusion, delete the last sentence…underline…and conclude on the clinical and political fallout of presented results.

INTRODUCTION: Shorten to the half (e.g. first and third paragraph) and explain the choice of hair samples as biological matrix in your study design.
SUBJECTS and Samples: explain the choice of 347 cases. All the pregnant women for a certain period? the ones who agreed? did some mother disagree? please clarify inclusion and exclusion criteria? how many deliveries in that hospital per month and per year?

Delete subparagraphs 221 and 222. put references.

RESULTS: eliminate subparagraphs. Maximum 2. the same for the Discussion Section.

DISCUSSION: the authors should discuss and focus their results in the light of clinical initiative and effect of policy strategies for drugs of abuse prevention.

THIS CAN BE A USEFUL SUGGESTIONS FOR THE READERS: HOW TO USE THE DATA TO INFLUENCE HEALTH AND POLICY STRATEGIES.

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'