Reviewer's report

Title: Predictors of the timing of initiation of antenatal care in an ethnically diverse urban cohort in the UK

Version: 1 Date: 14 November 2012

Reviewer: Pat A Tookey

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting and useful report containing useful up-to-date information on predictors of timing of antenatal booking in this diverse population. However, I think it would benefit from some further editing for ease of reading and clarity.

Major Compulsory Revisions

The author must respond to these before a decision on publication can be reached. For example, additional necessary experiments or controls, statistical mistakes, errors in interpretation.

1. In the second paragraph of the Background antenatal screening options are outlined. In addition to those mentioned infection screening is recommended at booking, and particularly in the case of screening for HIV and syphilis, early identification of screen positive women is essential to allow time for appropriate interventions to be offered to reduce the risk of mother to child transmission of infection. Specific guidelines for infection screening are available at http://infectiousdiseases.screening.nhs.uk/standards. This is of particular importance in the population under study as London, and Newham in particular, has a high prevalence of HIV in the pregnant population (eg see HPA HIV data at http://www.hpa.org.uk/Topics/InfectiousDiseases/InfectionsAZ/HIVAndSTIs/

Minor Essential Revisions

The author can be trusted to make these. For example, missing labels on figures, the wrong use of a term, spelling mistakes.

1. Abstract (not Absract)
2. page 7, not clear how resource constraints affect classification of a variable. Do you mean that country of birth was not included in the dataset?
3. page 8 3rd para 2nd line, all other ethnic groups
4. page 12 2nd para, whether or not born in the UK, rather than ‘place of birth’
5. page 12 3rd para, clarify ‘This finding’ (which finding?)
6. page 12 2nd line from bottom ‘ethnically diverse cohort’

- Discretionary Revisions

These are recommendations for improvement which the author can choose to ignore. For example clarifications, data that would be useful but not essential.

1. Ref 3. The NICE Guideline was updated in 2010, and is likely to be updated
periodically – it would be helpful to give the web address as well. http://guidance.nice.org.uk/CG62/NICEGuidance/pdf/English

2. Is it possible to combine tables 2 and 3 for ease of reference for the reader, so they can clearly see the changes in adjusted ORs? Whether or not combined, variable headings need to be consistent across the two tables.

3. Page 11 discussion of reporting bias. In addition to issues mentioned here, the other paper reports that Somali women interviewed reported their LMP to be later than it was in the hope of avoiding induction... Not sure how confident the authors are of this observation, but could consider referring to it since it suggests that gestation at booking in this paper might be differentially misclassified by ethnic group, and differences might be underestimated.

4. Is there any information on very late booking, eg in the 3rd trimester?

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