Reviewer’s report

Title: Surveillance during pregnancy: Methods and Response Rates from a hospital based pilot study of the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System in Ireland

Version: 1 Date: 30 July 2013

Reviewer: Cindy Liu

Reviewer’s report:

The objective of the study was to adapt, test, and evaluate the CDC PRAMS methodology in Ireland. This is a very worthy objective and one that has the potential to obtain on-going surveillance on maternal before before and after birth. Overall, I believe the authors did a fine job in adapting the PRAMS methodology – they were careful in adapting the recruitment and the items to fit the culture and system within Ireland. Overall, the paper can benefit by a revision that focuses on (1) describing the methodology for measuring expected outcomes and (2) a greater discussion on the feasibility of implementation throughout other hospitals, and specifically in areas that are underserved.

MAJOR

(1) The conclusion made is that PRAMS Is an acceptable and effective method of collecting information, yet I was not sure how this was determined. The method for evaluating the methodology for use in Ireland should be described. What are the metrics used to determine the effectiveness of the pilot? I assume that the achieving a response rate above 65% (as designated by the CDC) is one measure. In some ways, the study also came across as a validation study, given the comparisons to the other surveys although this was not explicitly stated. Describing the expected outcomes in introduction or the methods would help make this clear.

(2) One of the limitations of this pilot study is the lack of racial/ethnic categories (Irish vs. other). What constitutes other? The paper acknowledges that the PRAMS in the U.S. have helped to identify health inequalities. While this may be a limitation of the pilot study, going forward, more details should be obtained on the population groups (race/ethnicity, urban/rural, education level). This would be helpful in identifying disparities in the Irish population.

(3) It appears that authors attributed much of the results to the hospital (e.g., higher prevalence of pregnancy conditions and complications due to improved recall). It seems that the results then are highly hospital specific. As such, the paper would benefit from a greater discussion on the feasibility of implementation across other hospitals. First, the authors may want to highlight a limitation of their study, which is that it only collected data from one large hospital. Given this, I recommend that the authors address concerns related to the ability to administer
the survey in hard to reach and underserved women. Again, this speaks to my comment above regarding the ability for PRAMS to address inequalities. What are the challenges that other hospitals may face given the lessons learned from this particular pilot study? Greater emphasis on this in the conclusions would greatly enhance this paper.

MINOR

(1) Abstract: while the response rate of 67.2% seems appropriate, I was confused by the 2% of women who refused the survey and 7% who opted out. Shouldn’t all these numbers add up to 100%?

(2) Were all the CORE questions from the U.S. PRAMS included and what specific modifications were made to include Irish specific items? Please describe as it would be helpful for other nations who may be thinking about adapting the PRAMS as well.

(3) Why were only half of the study participants administered the Food Frequency Questionnaires?

(4) Chi square analyses should be conducted on the data presented in Table 1, to determine significance in the proportions.

(5) How many items were in the survey, in total? The numbers presented in Table 3 seem very high. Is there information on how long the survey took for participants on average? While the response rates was very good for the pilot, the length of time may make a difference when implementation across other hospitals.

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest 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.