Reviewer’s report

Title: Japanese trends in breastfeeding coverage in baby-friendly hospitals between 2007 and 2010: a retrospective hospital based surveillance study

Version: 7 Date: 10 December 2012

Reviewer: Eivind Ystrom

Reviewer’s report:

Major concerns
The authors conclude that implementing BFH activities can increase breastfeeding coverage in Japan. The results presented do not support this conclusion.

It is not clear how the 61 BFH hospitals were sampled. It appears that participation was not random, something which very likely would create sampling bias. Furthermore, if the most motivated hospitals were included into the study, there is a risk for reverse confounding. That is, motivated hospitals participate, but their breastfeeding coverage would go up regardless of participation.

The authors present almost no details on the data on nationwide coverage of breastfeeding in Japan. Since this is in effect the control group, the basis for these data should be described in detail. Moreover, children which are a part of the control group (i.e. the whole nation) should not be excluded from the data (table 1). If the two groups do not sample children in the same way, they cannot be compared.

The BFH hospitals should be compared with the normal population using relative risks with 95% confidence intervals. This can easily be done in Excel or in STATA using “tables for epidemiologists”.

If participation in BFH has an effect on breastfeeding coverage there should be an increase year by year after participation. The authors should present breastfeeding coverage by year of participation in BFH.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests