Reviewer's report

Title: A qualitative study on the breastfeeding experiences of first-time mothers in Vientiane, Lao PDR

Version: 2 Date: 30 August 2013

Reviewer: Roslyn Carmel Giglia

Reviewer's report:

A qualitative study on the breastfeeding experiences of first-time mothers in Vientiane, Lao PDR
Reviewer: Roslyn Giglia

Major Compulsory Revisions

In addition to these comments there are multiple comments throughout the text to be considered.

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
The research question is clearly defined and the sample is unique.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
Given this is a qualitative study it is difficult to determine the rigor with which participants were enrolled and informed about the study purpose. Possibly a flow diagram outlining which methods of data collection were used for each group and the numbers participating would be useful.

There is some ambiguity in the methods and results. The abstract states the following:
“A qualitative research design was chosen in order to obtain rich, in-depth information. Two districts in Vientiane were selected, and in each district three key informant interviews, two focus group discussions with six participants each and eight in-depth interviews were conducted. In addition to this, one key informant interview was conducted at the national level with a member of the Centre.”

However the text states the following:
“In total, 6 FGDs with 36 participants were carried out.”

And further on:
“In addition to first time mothers, we purposively identified key informants for individual interviews (N = 6) based on discussions with local public health staff and who were thought to be likely to be able to provide the most insight. Key informants included representatives of the Ministry of Health, health staff and respected female elders. In addition, one interview was conducted at the national level with a member of the Centre of Mother and Child Health (MCH), identified through a written request to the Centre.”
It is unclear whether the information is for the mothers from the focus groups or the in-depth interviews. Was the doctor a male or female and part of the research team? Could this have influenced answers (limitation)?

3. Are the data sound?
The data appear sound however there appears to be little development of themes for which the presentation of the data pertains to. It appears that the headings have been developed first and then the data slotted in under each heading which is not methodologically appropriate for qualitative data.

4. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
Some assumptions have been drawn from the data which are not in keeping with the information found in the analysis. See in text comments.

5. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
See in text comments for details.

6. Is the writing acceptable?
The quality of the written English is poor and needs careful consideration before publication. I have highlighted only some of the areas for correction (yellow highlight).

The order of the presentation of the results is at best confusing. Comments from mothers and key informants and in-depth interviews appear at random. Explanation as to how the data will be presented would be helpful and the grouping of comments specific to each group would help facilitate reading.

The table presented is confusing in both format and content.

Overall Comments
This paper provides some interesting insights into a nation in transition from a developing country into developed nation with the changes being reflected in breastfeeding practices. The sample is unique and the data is informative however the rigor of data collection and quality of this paper is lacking. I would suggest this paper is unsuitable for BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth and possibly more suited to a journal such as International Breastfeeding Journal or similar.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

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