Reviewer's report

**Title:** Perceptions of postnatal care: factors influencing primiparous mothers perceptions of postnatal communication and care

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 13 February 2013

**Reviewer:** Annette Bernloehr

**Reviewer's report:**

Overall, the questions asked by the authors are well defined and relevant. The paper makes interesting reading and is of relevance for health professionals involved in maternity care, as well as for researchers in the field. It is interesting to see that a non-midwife and non-physician decided to investigate into this subject. However, the manuscript has some flaws that need alleviation before publication can be considered.

**Introduction**

1) **Discretionary revision:** Overall, the subject is introduced well and arguments for its importance are provided. It might have been a good idea to address the (potential) impact of maternal satisfaction and wellbeing on health and wellbeing of the entire family, as well as on the development of the infant.

2) **Major compulsory revision:** Especially in the introduction, outdated references are cited. If there are no more recent references, this needs to be acknowledged and the lack of research in this field made clear. Otherwise, more recent references need to be cited here. In addition to that, there might be more research-oriented references available. A look at the subject from the midwifery perspective might bring some results.

3) **Minor essential revision:** After citing reference No. 9 and the new sentence starting with “Pryun [sic!], Rickman...” a space needs to be introduced. At the beginning of the section, the influence of communication on satisfaction is discussed. In the latter part, the influence of personality traits on communication patterns and perception of communication are discussed. These two concepts need to be clearly distinguished.

**Methods**

4) **Minor essential revision:** The chosen methods are appropriate, but at times insufficiently, or imprecisely described. The sample was labelled as “mothers who had given birth vaginally in U.K. within the last 12 months”. Later on it becomes clear that the sample was recruited either through the internet (across the entire UK?), and from groups in Scotland. Being from central Europe I would not dare to interfere with UK affairs, but I thought that Scottish people are proud of being different. It might be that the sample is not representative for a) including only mothers who engaged with additional services, such as postnatal groups or
internet platforms, b) including women mainly from Scotland, c) opportunistic recruitment. Some of these limitations are acknowledged by the authors.

5) Minor essential revision: In addition, the specification of recruitment “within the last 12 months” is not very clear, as the reader does not know how long it took to analyse the findings and to write the draft. Please state month and year to define the period, such as “recruitment / the study took place between May and September 2011”.

6) Major compulsory revision: From the manuscript it does not become clear at which time points within 12 months post partum measurement took place. Did the women participate at any point in time within this time span? If this was the case, the analysis needs to address the potential influence of the time evolved between giving birth and participation in the study. If not, this needs to become clear from the text.

Results

7) Minor essential revision: In the results section, information is missing, such as how many women were approached, but declined to take part in the study, or how many data sets were incomplete.

8) Minor essential revision: Table 1
The information presented in the lines “number of breastfeeding participants” and “non-breastfeeding participants” is nearly identical. As in this case there is very little difference, presenting one or the other would suffice. If you present both, the numbers in the online group need explanation, as they do not add up to 100%.

9) Minor essential revision: On page 7 the reader finds this statement “There were no major differences demographically between the online sub-sample and the parent and baby group subsample”. However, in the online group 7 women were found to be mildly depressed, while only 2 such women were found in the other sub-group. This might be seen as a major difference and requires a critical comment.

10) Major compulsory revision: Page 8 (“Does the psychological functioning and/or personality traits of mothers’ impact upon satisfaction with postnatal healthcare?“): please provide the n for the respective groups.

11) Minor essential revision: Page 9: please provide the actual p-levels.

Discussion

12) Minor essential revision: Take care to state the names of organisations correctly. The “National Institute of Clinical Excellence” (page 12) should read “National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence”.

13) Major compulsory revision: Limitations with regard to the definition of postnatal period were acknowledged. However, no reference was made with
regard to the point in time at which the mothers took part in the study. It does not become clear whether participation was possible throughout what the authors defined as postpartum period, or at specific times during this period. Moreover, it would have been interesting to see differences in ratings of individual women if they were asked at different time points within the postpartum period, e.g. after six weeks, six months and one year. It might be that the view of women shifts over time. If no such data is available, a critical comment is required, which is backed up by scientific evidence.

Figures

14) Minor essential revision: Figure 3 is not mentioned in the text. Moreover, it is a bit too trivial and should be omitted.

15) Tables seem to be available twice. Please check for potential duplication.

Referencing

16) Major compulsory revision: Generally, referencing needs more attention.

Reference No. 2 needs to be cited correctly (see original publication). The same applies e.g. to reference No. 26.

Reference 4 is a 30 year old reference. Even if this is a seminal publication, there needs to be more recent evidence to back it up. If not, the scarcity of literature needs to be acknowledged. The same applies to several references in the introduction.

One author is cited as “Pryun” in the text (page 3), but listed as “Pruyn” in the references (ref No. 10). As a general remark, citing the names of authors in the text is correct, but it is strongly recommended to use neutral formulations, such as “research has demonstrated…” instead of the names of authors. This avoids errors in spelling and saves space for more interesting information than the names of several, probably unknown, authors.

When referring to a specific guideline, e.g. on page 12 “The National Institute of Clinical Excellence guidelines suggest…” the original reference is needed, rather than that to a related document (reference No. 32).

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.