Reviewer’s report

Title: Factors determining success of VBAC, a case control study in three teaching Hospitals, Ethiopia

Version: 1 Date: 4 June 2012

Reviewer: Tegbar Yigzaw

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Major Compulsory Revisions

1. Editorial revision is needed throughout the manuscript

2. In the Abstract section, reporting of the results is misleading in terms of direction of association - it is not consistent with findings reported in the results section

3. In the Background section, the study acknowledges similar previous studies and their inability to result in a validated tool to predict success of VBAC; however, it falls short of explaining how it intends to fill that gap or improve upon previous studies.

4. In the Methods section, the authors used a sample size calculation formula for cohort and comparative cross-sectional studies for a study with a different design (case control). I could not reproduce the sample size calculations. The assumptions made are not congruent with the one used for case-control study.

5. In the Methods section, the authors should provide more information about the sources and methods of case ascertainment and control selection.

6. The authors should describe the existing protocol for VBAC. What is it? Are they the same in the three hospitals?

7. In the Results section, the authors should provide more information about participants. How many were examined for eligibility? How many were confirmed eligible? Indicate number of participants with missing data and for how many?

8. In the Results section, the authors should provide descriptive summary of main exposure variables preferably in tabular format.

9. Revisit the binary analysis in Table 1. The odds ratio reported for duration of labor is wrong.

10. In the Discussion section, the strengths need revision. It is not clear if all mothers with VBAC were included. A flow chart of the selection of participants in the results section will clarify that. The authors had also suggested elsewhere only those with less missing data were included.

11. The readers would also like to hear more about the limitations. How many charts were missing?

12. There is major flaw in the Discussion section. The authors failed to provide even a single reference for the comparisons made with other studies.
13. In the Conclusion section, one of the premises of the study was that there was no protocol for VBAC. However, in this study it was reported that the hospitals had a protocol. Yet again the conclusion calls for developing a protocol. The authors should have described the existing protocol and explained if they are suggesting a revision or modification.

Minor Essential Revisions
1. Avoid abbreviations. If you have to use them write them in full at first use
2. The authors appear to confuse univariate, bivariate and multivariate analysis in methods, results and discussion sections. Revise the statement about analysis: “a multivariate analysis was run using binary logistic regression…to control the confounding effect.” Binary does not control effects of confounders.
3. The discussion should have focused on important findings instead of repeating all the results.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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.