Reviewer’s report

Title: A Survey of Access to Trial of Labor in California Hospitals in 2012

Version: 1 Date: 11 January 2013

Reviewer: Kim Cox

Reviewer’s report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this manuscript. This is an important area of research, as many women continue to receive unwanted and unnecessary repeat cesarean deliveries. Although this research has its greatest applicability in the United States, some of the issues that are raised are relevant internationally as well. Overall, the article is very well-written and the design is scientifically sound. My comments pertain mainly to items needing clarification or further discussion rather than to “fatal” flaws.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. The discussion utilized a number of nurses’ comments to illustrate and emphasize the survey finding that “physician willingness” to offer or support VBAC was a major factor in low rates of VBAC in California hospitals. Since the design did not include physicians’ or nurse-midwives’ perspectives, it remains an open question if their responses would be the same as the nurses who were interviewed. Thus, the voice we hear is that of the L&D nurse. It also appears that the hospital VBAC policy data was based on nurses’ recall and interpretation. If this was not the case in terms of validation, then this should be made clear. These are not design flaws per se, but they should be explained and/or explicitly acknowledgement in the discussion as a limitation of the research.

2. The discussion section would benefit from some critical analysis around the significant finding that women in TOLAC hospitals were significantly less likely to have public insurance. Perhaps the explanation about the influence of Kaiser is the reason, but that was not clear to me. How might that be a factor in policy-making and physician willingness?

3. “United States” should be added to the title due to the international audience.

4. In the first sentence of the abstract, the “two organizations” should be named.

5. Please re-write the second and third sentences on page 4 (Background) to make them clearer.

6. It would be beneficial to have a little more information on midwifery practice if you have the data. For example, if the midwife was caring for the woman in labor, was the physician still required to be in-house or immediately available?

Discretionary Revisions

1. On page 13, second sentence, “consumer demand” is mentioned. Was that qualified in any way during the interview, such as pressure from ICAN, etc.
Please offer some explanation.

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

**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.