Reviewer’s report

Title: Cesarean section: The importance of telling the woman’s story for effective clinical audit. Findings from a multi-center record review study.

Version: 2 Date: 30 August 2013

Reviewer: Karlyn Frank

Reviewer’s report:

Review of manuscript: Cesarean section: The importance of telling the woman’s story for effective clinical audit. Findings from a multi-center record review study

1. Major Compulsory Revision: Title: Emotive, does not adequately convey what the study is about.

2. Major Compulsory Revision: Introduction and review of the literature: adequate, however, the section beginning “EngenderHealth’s Fistula Care … performance of services” is irrelevant to the subject at hand and should be left out.

Methods: The participating hospitals should have been labelled in the methods section and not introduced in the results, thereby adding confusion e.g. Guinea A and B, Mali A etc.

3. Major Compulsory Revision: The authors do not explain how randomisation was conducted, and in hospitals where there were fewer than 350 records, randomisation could not have taken place, therefore introducing potential for information bias.

4. Major Compulsory Revision: Some variables were not made clear in the methods section including those alluding to quality of maternal care. Other variables from the 38 which were collected from the records are not well defined e.g. “intake” (What is this referring to?), “operating theatre” (in what context?).

5. Major Compulsory Revision: The section of text beginning “A total of … where possible” best belongs in the results section, instead of the methods (last paragraph of methods section)

6. Major Compulsory Revision: Results: This detail in this section is overwhelming. The tables are crowded, and contain too much information. The authors should have presented the most important results more succinctly. The current presentation of the results suggests the authors were unable to prioritise the most important information to convey to the reader. Also from a technical point of view, there is a lack of uniformity of the labelling of the tables and presentation of data – Table 3 omits the “%” in the title. Table 6 looks clumsy with the percentage sign next to each number in each cell of the table.

Discussion: The discussion addresses each of the findings of the results and the objectives appropriately, however this study cannot show whether any of the recommendations will make a difference to the state of affairs described in the
study, as it was not a clinical audit.

7. Major Compulsory Revision: What the authors do not make clear is whether they are passing this paper off as an audit or suggesting an audit be undertaken on the basis of their findings. Further, the data collected was from 2008, and given that most countries are striving towards attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), we cannot assume that the findings from 2008 are still the case in 2013, five years later.

My impression: The authors ambitiously attempt to describe too many variables from too many sites thereby creating a study with a great deal of information, much of which is interesting but not scientifically useful. Most importantly, this study cannot, with any degree of certainty assume that their recommendations for better record keeping, transfer notes and use of the partogram would actually improve maternal or perinatal outcomes.

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I have no competing interests