Reviewer’s report

Title: Transfers to hospital in planned home births - a systematic review

Version: 1 Date: 4 February 2014

Reviewer: Atle Klovning

Reviewer’s report:

BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth considers the following article types: Case report, Database, Debate, Research, Software, Study protocol and Technical advance articles. The journal does not generally consider narrative review articles.

When assessing the work, please consider the following points:

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
   Yes.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
   Yes, both well analyzed and interpreted. This is a high quality piece of work!

3. Are the data sound?
   Yes. The authors have especially taking in consideration the consequences of heterogeneity.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
   Yes. The two major reporting standards, MOOSE and PRISMA.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
   Yes, although, I suggest formulating a more clinically relevant conclusion.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
   Yes, indeed. And very transparently declosed. The table on sensitivity analysis is very important. And educational.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
   Yes. But please consider: Page 8, Highlight (Yellow):
   Content: "Conclusion"
   Comment: I suggest «Conclusion» changed to «Implications for future studies», as I think this extremely well performed systematic review deserves a more clinical conclusion, not just guidance for renewed review, being the largest systematic review ever on homebirth.
It also seems apparent that independent midwives in smaller settings perform better (10-12% transfer rate), while midwives in large systems seem to transfer 30% or more? I would appreciate some formulations on the clinical impacts or extrapolations of their findings, perhaps also in a historical light, or in light of the global challenges in the developing part of the World. Just to lift the paper a bit more.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
Yes.

9. Is the writing acceptable?
Only minor English orthographical errors.

Please make your review as constructive and detailed as possible in your comments so that authors have the opportunity to overcome any serious deficiencies that you find and please also divide your comments into the following categories:

- Discretionary Revisions (which are recommendations for improvement but which the author can choose to ignore)

Annotation Summary for: transfers

Content: «15th» occurs twice

11. Page 4, Highlight (Yellow):
Content: "two"
Comment: Two of three? Would it be a different combination of pairs of reviewers for different papers? Was Kappa score performed between the two reviewers?

12. Page 6, Highlight (Yellow):
Content: «in multiparous women from 5.8 to 12.0 %». Which sounds reasonable.

Page 7, Highlight (Yellow):
Content: "The reasons for accepting high-risk cases in home birth settings should be further explored. Are independent midwives more willing to accept such patients, or are the women themselves pushing midwives to accept them for home births?"
Comment: In itself an interesting research question more appropriate in «Implications».

13. Page 7, Highlight (Yellow):
Content: "In one study, slow progress was one of the definitions for an emergency transfer [22]. This is usually not regarded as an emergency situation."
Comment: Would it be possible to adjust for this and reanalyze?
- Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

14. Page 2, Highlight
Content: "studies should have been published in 1985 or later with data not older than from 1980 and data on transfers from home to hospital should be described."
Comment: Why was this period chosen?

15. Page 4, Highlight (Yellow):
Content: "Studies from Western countries, published in 1985 or later with data not be older than 1980."
Comment: Why this restriction?

16. Page 8, Highlight (Yellow):
Content: "Conclusion"
Comment: I suggest «Conclusion» changed to «Implications for future studies», as I think this extremely well performed systematic review deserves a more clinical conclusion. It seems that independent midwives in smaller settings perform better (10-12% transfer rate), while midwives in large systems seem to transfer 30% or more? I would appreciate some formulations on the clinical impacts or extrapolations of the findings, perhaps in a historical light, or in light of the global challenges in the developing part of the World. Just to lift the paper a bit more.

- Major Compulsory Revisions (which the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
None.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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.