Reviewer's report

Title: Mothers' experience of their contact with their stillborn infant: An interpretative phenomenological analysis.

Version: 2 Date: 21 March 2014

Reviewer: Helen Bedford

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Helen Bedford 21.3.14

• Major Compulsory Revisions

The author must respond to these before a decision on publication can be reached. For example, additional necessary experiments or controls, statistical mistakes, errors in interpretation.

• 1 This proposed paper would benefit from greater clarity and depth around, and reflection on, the methodological underpinnings for the research—i.e. the study uses Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), and gives a rationale for this, however this approach is not fully explored regarding the authors' philosophical position(s) (?phenomenological) and the fit of this approach within a larger longitudinal study.

• 2 The themes generated from this study are interesting and appear rich and valuable for women, their families and health care professionals, however their presentation would be enhanced with much greater depth. At present this part of the paper is dominated by quotations from participants.

• 3 To expand on point 1, this paper would be enhanced by reflection on the strengths and weakness of the methodological approach and consideration of the notion of reflexivity by the researchers. (It is acknowledged that one limitation and one strength are mentioned in the last paragraph of the discussion section.) It is anticipated that this would have been a challenging and sensitive study to undertake. These aspects are given scant attention (and it is only at the end of the discussion section that readers learn where the interviews took place – this information would be useful earlier together with other basic information such as duration of interviews etc.). Aspects to consider could be: What can we learn from this study re interviewing mothers bereaved by stillbirth using a phenomenological approach? What, if any, challenges were encountered re the emotional potential for these interviews and how were they anticipated/managed? (i.e. were women offered further sources of support if needed after the interviews?)

• 4 The larger longitudinal study is only mentioned in the results section and limited information is presented. Greater clarity and information earlier in the
paper would benefit readers re this study.

• Minor Essential Revisions

None

• Discretionary Revisions

• 5 The authors may wish to consider the challenges of reporting in this study re the use of singulars and plurals – e.g. the title acknowledges ‘Mothers’” (plural) but ‘experience’ and ‘infants’ (singular) and there are other instances in the draft text.

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

**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.