Reviewer's report

Title: The Birth Memories and Recall Questionnaire (BirthMARQ): Development and evaluation

Version: Date: 22 February 2014

Reviewer: Ingela Lundgren

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting article with an important topic. To follow up birth memories in relation to mental health has clinical implications. There is a lack of measures developed specifically for the use with childbirth.

Major:

Background: The first sentence is about childbirth as a significant life event for women and their partners which is usually accompanied by strong positive emotions but can also evoke negative emotions, with a reference to Slade et al. 1993. The abstract is also beginning with the same sentence. However, the article has no further references to childbirth as strong positive/empowering/strengthening experiences. If the questionnaire should focus birth memories in a general population of women this aspect is missing. The first paragraph in the background is further about birth as a trauma, postnatal depression, and PTSD. Is this questionnaire developed for these problems? In the next paragraph there are some sentences about events of birth but references are missing. On page 4 last paragraph the authors describe how the development of the questionnaire was done. What are potentially relevant dimensions? What references are supported these dimensions? Validity of the questionnaire was tested by comparing women with and without PTSD and depression? Women with strong positive experiences were they compared with women without strong positive experiences? The aim was to provide a tool that could be used specifically to examine the phenomenological characteristics of memories of childbirth and to further our understanding of how memory characteristics relate to mental health outcomes? The design describes memories of birth and psychological well-being. The focus of the study should be better described.

Minor:

Why did the authors not validate the MEC measurement in postnatal women?

On p. 6 second paragraph it is stated that all items were phrased to be relevant to childbirth. References should be added. Face validity was assessed by 5 women who had experienced birth. The article misses description of mode of delivery for these women and for the women who participated in the survey.

The Questionnaire: Centrality of memory, question 10-13: This questions are about birth as central for women but not in what way. For example if the experience was a turning point it could both be in positive and negative aspects.
Conclusion in abstract and manuscript start with a statement about Birth MARQ as the first questionnaire specifically designed for memories of childbirth. This statement should be changed to the focus of the study.

**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.