Reviewer's report

Title: Severe Maternal Morbidity and Near Miss: incidence and risk factors in the reference maternities of Sergipe, Northeast, Brazil.

Version: 2 Date: 20 May 2013

Reviewer: Joao Paulo Souza

Reviewer's report:

Dear Editors,

Many thanks for the opportunity to review this interesting paper from Brazil. I would like to congratulate the authors for carrying such study, which provides additional experience and insights to the application of the near miss concept in maternal health.

The authors posed a well-defined question (i.e. determine the prevalence of SAMM and NM, describe associated risk factors and calculate the indicators described by WHO). Methods are well described though I would like to suggest the authors to change their description of study design. This is a cross-sectional study with a nested case-control component. Case identification was prospective and data collection was concurrent to the case identification. Data is sound but I would like to recommend the authors to strengthen their report through adhesion to the STROBE statement. The discussion is balanced and I believe that when STROBE is applied by the authors before resubmission additional points can be highlighted in the discussion, including the study limitations section. The existing body of knowledge has been adequately used by the authors.

The writing is acceptable but I have made several minor suggestions in the paper by hand which could be useful to the authors in their revision. Below are my main suggestions:

Major Compulsory Revision
1. Adhere to the STROBE statement and revise the paper accordingly
2. Revise the description of the study design (see above).
3. Please provide additional details on the selection of controls, particularly what is meant by “at random”. Was there any formal random selection strategy? Was there any algorithm or hard rule to be followed? How the authors minimized the selection bias?

Minor essential revisions
4. The authors should note in the introduction the differences between the broad SAMM and the more specific NM concepts;
5. The authors should note that while maternal deaths were not individually included in the study (actually, it would have been good to have reviewed the hospital records of maternal deaths and do a combined assessment), the number
of maternal deaths was retrieved at hospital level.
6. Please correct the reference 13 and its content in the text.
7. Table 4: Please replace MMG by SAMM in the table heading

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

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**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'