Reviewer's report

Title: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander maternal and infant health and wellbeing: A systematic search of programs and services in Australian primary health care settings

Version: 1 Date: 15 April 2014

Reviewer: Kerry-Ann O'Grady

Reviewer's report:

This paper presents a review of research that has been conducted on MIH programs and initiatives that have been conducted in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations in Australia. It is a useful synthesis of work in the field and the authors conclusion's that much more high quality research needs to be conducted in this field is one that would be widely supported.

Overall it is well written, however, for a systematic review it lacks detail on the types of study designs and programs which makes it difficult for the reader to assess how appropriate their summaries of study/program quality are.

..Major revisions

As above, there is inadequate description of studies/programs and the supplementary files do not provide criticial information. Studies are grouped into either quantitative or qualitative and then by "Program Description" or "Intervention Research" which provide little information about how outcomes or interventions were evaluated. There is no information on study designs, population or sample sizes, characteristics of study populations (eg, age, urban/remote etc).

For the "Intervention Research" studies, were these RCTs, before/after designs etc. This is critical information needed to determine the quality of study and whether the design was appropriate to the question. The "intervention issue" described is in many instances too broad....eg if it often listed as "Aboriginal maternal and infant health" which is broad and could relate to anything" Same for qualitative studies.

Similarly, in the supplementary files there are many papers listed as program descriptions but then you have reported interventions and outcomes or effects...how can you have outcomes/effects if these have not been systematically evaluated through an appropriate study? An example is the first row of Table 1. You describe a program description, with non-specific intervention issue, then describe interventions and outcomes/effects by then state in the last column that study quality was N/A as it was a program description. Hence it appears contradictory and the reader would need to source the original paper to work out what you were referring to. This occurs frequently throughout Table 1.
My other main comment about the paper is the discussion. There is no introductory/overall summary paragraph...it just goes straight into themes. I feel the section on "Organisation" goes off on a tangent. I would argue it is not a majority operating out of ACCHOs....looks pretty equal to me (and it could be publication bias operating here) and this section ignores the fact that a lot of programs etc are happening in the mainstream sector which needs to be commented on, particularly given a lot of Indigenous people use mainstream services even when an ACCHO is available. I understand the reason for the argument but it doesn't really address the objective of your review. If it was an objective, that needs to be stated up in the methods.

Minor revisions

1. Tables 2 and 3 need explanations of what the (Q1), (Q2) etc are referring to and also what the 80 - 100% are referring to

2. Abstract and background: Should specify "Australian" the first time Aboriginal and Torres Islander women are referred to given this is an international journal

3. There are a few places where sentences start with an integer (eg..48%). This should be written out in text if starting the sentence

4. The reference list needs tidying up and I don't think it is consistent with BMC output style

**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 have no conflicts of interest to declare