Reviewer's report

Title: Midwives' lived experience of a birth where the woman suffers an obstetric anal sphincter injury. A phenomenological study

Version: 2
Date: 6 May 2014

Reviewer: Holly Priddis

Reviewer's report:

- Major Compulsory Revisions (which the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

1. Line 63: The first sentence does not make sense to me. It is stated that the incidence has increased however you then describe a reduction from 4.2% to 3.5%. Rewording of this would make sense to the reader.

2. I find paragraph three (starting at line 76) to be similar to paragraph one (starting at line 63). The information presented in both paragraphs can be combined and summarised.

3. Line 111: Can you please describe how recently the midwives had assisted a women who had sustained severe perineal trauma – this information could be provided in a summary table, stating if it was days, weeks, months or years.

4. Line 128: Collection of Data: I would be interested in the other questions that were asked during the in-depth interview. Were there similarities in the questions asked during the interview? A list as an attachment would be helpful.

5. Line 142: For those not familiar with reflective lifeworld research can you please define what a constituent is. Are the five constituents represented with the five subheadings in the findings? I would be more clear about this.

6. Line 190: Did all of the midwives who participated in the study describe that they could see signs of imminent perineal trauma? Were there any midwives that did not see the signs? This does not correspond with the findings reported under the subheading “Not seeing any signs and being surprised”.

7. Line 347: It is described that the baby is born and everything is well, however can you please clarify if this woman sustained subsequent perineal trauma or was the perineum intact and therefore “well”? If the perineum was intact, are the feelings of guilt experienced by Vivian as a result of her directing the woman to push? This is unclear

8. In the Discussion the use of the terms “accepted truth” throughout is a little confusing. I find I have to keep referring back to the original description on Line 434. Consider a way of rewording this to make it to make it easier for the reader.
9 Line 481: This paragraph is not relevant as there was no report of horizontal violence within the Findings.

10. Please clearly state strengths and limitations of the research.

- Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

1 The quotes by the midwives which appear in italics could be indented to stand out more to the reader.

2 Line 63: You are missing a full stop at the end of this sentence.

3 Line 135: This sentence has “by” at the end of the sentence prior to the reference, please delete or amend accordingly.

4 Line 148: I would move consent information above the collection of data to ensure informed consent was obtained prior to data collection.

5 Line 201: I think “perspective” would be a more accurate word to use then “angles”, the use of the word angles to me implied the direction that the midwife viewed the perineum during birth.

6 Line 205: the phrase “urge to bear down” is used twice in the one sentence, consider alternative terminology.

7 Line 223: The sentence “the fear of the women sustaining a sphincter injury….” I would reword this to clarify what “themselves” means. I understand what it is implying but it is a little unclear.

8 Line 227: The word “retrospect” is used twice in one sentence, consider alternative terminology.

9 Line 237: I would like to see the information from Catherine as a quote, I believe this would read better. Alternatively, describe the actions of Catherine using more appropriate language, and put terms like “really painful” in quotation marks.

10 Line 248: The sentence “A colleague can assist her…. It is unclear if you are referring to a specific midwife here, does this continue to be Catherine’s story? Or is this from the findings in general. If so I would restructure this sentence along the lines of “The midwives in this study described how at times they requested assistance from their colleagues…."

11 Line 259: This is a large quote and could be shortened

12 Line 271: I have noted the use of the word “she” throughout the paper. I would replace this with “the midwife” or appropriate formal terminology.

13 Line 289: remove the word “the” in the section ‘what are the their tissues like?’

14 Line 437: The sentence “The problem of the increased incidence….” Requires
rewording

15 Line 502: The introduction to this paragraph requires rewording as it is not clear what it is describing.

16 Line 513: Check the placement of punctuation in this sentence.

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

None

**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.