Reviewer's report

Title: Prevalence of childbirth fear in an Australian sample of pregnant women

Version: 2 Date: 20 May 2014

Reviewer: Jane Iles

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Discretionary Revisions

Background

In the background section, I wonder if it is also worth drawing on the physiological link between high levels of fear and anxiety when in labour and a possible slowing down of the labour process itself? In addition, are there possible links between entering labour in a highly aroused fearful state of mind and increased vulnerability to experiencing the event as traumatic?

Current knowledge of prevalence

It would be helpful to expand on the sentence about the impact of fear of childbirth on daily activities. This seems a very large/sweeping statement to make without further detail. It would therefore be helpful to give some specific examples of this impact to give the reader an idea of how fear impacts on day-to-day functioning. This seems important when justifying why it is important to explore and understand this area. It would be good to have additional explanation and justification on this.

I think further information is needed on why this is an area that warrants research. E.g. why do we need to know about levels of childbirth fear? How does fear of childbirth impact on day-to-day functioning, and does it link with any obstetric outcomes? From the current introduction I don’t get a sense of why we need to know this, and specifically why we need to know the different levels of fear as asked in the first question (low, moderate, severe) – why is this important?

Objectives

Spelling mistake in second objective, word ‘obstetric’

Method

There are no figures provided for the number of women who were sent information about the study and responded to the study without being approached by a researcher at the hospital.

Discussion

It might be worth mentioning the literature on traumatic symptoms following childbirth when discussing the mixed results on parity. I wonder if a certain
proportion of multiparous women will be entering a subsequent labour experience having already experienced a very traumatic labour and birth, elevating their levels of fear?

Conclusions

It would be worthwhile including more details on the clinical relevance of this study; again addressing the issue of why this is worthwhile research and what it tells us. What can clinicians put into place based on this knowledge, and why does it need to be acted on? I am still left uncertain about the clinical value of this research based on the current discussion and links to practice.

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