Reviewer’s report

Title: The Canadian Birth Place Study: Examining maternity provider attitudes and inter-professional conflict around planned home birth

Version: 1 Date: 30 April 2014

Reviewer: Christine Catling-Paull

Reviewer’s report:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to review this important paper. Health professional attitudes to home births are important to assess for a number of reasons. These have been outlined succinctly in this work.

This paper has identified a large discrepancy between medical and midwifery staff attitudes, which has implications for collaboration and overall function of an organization. Services whose staff have similar philosophies will work together more supportively, and this translates to the care they give to women and their families.

My PhD work in Australia showed that women appreciated the ‘safety net’ of the publicly-funded (hospital based) homebirth service that they were booked with. The ‘seamlessness’ of transition of care, when needed, was also valued; the midwives were equally comfortable working in the maternity unit as they were in women’s homes. The collaboration between staff was likely enhanced through this model. Currently, the attitudes of staff surrounding transfer of care from home to hospital is being studied in Australia.

In particular I thought the paper identified people’s fear of the unknown, notably the midwives, obstetricians and GPs that did not have experience of home birth. The paper suggests that interdisciplinary training and exposure to home births for all maternity health professionals is key to a change in attitude. This may indeed go a long way to shifting attitudes, but to also be exposed to caring for women in a continuity model of care would enhance this understanding. This would enable individuals to gain a greater understanding of the trust and confidence that develops in the relationships between midwives and women. These factors are also vitally important for facilitation of home births, as I’m sure you know.

Overall the paper was a pleasure to read, and was a great study outlining the need for interdisciplinary education in order to improve collaboration. I will be interested to hear of the plans for interdisciplinary education in Canada in the future.

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
The research question was clear and unambiguous.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
Yes, the tool was well described and referenced.

3. Are the data sound?
I recommend the use of a statistician to examine this section.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
Yes.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
Yes, both sections are relevant and clear.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
Yes, the limitations are stated.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
Yes, this is within the article.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
Yes.

9. Is the writing acceptable?
The writing is clear, succinct and easy to read.

Level of interest: An exceptional article

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:
The reviewer has previously published within the field of home birth.