Reviewer's report

Title: Pain relief in labour: A qualitative study to determine how to support women to make decisions about pain relief in labour

Version: 2 Date: 24 April 2013

Reviewer: Marlies Rijnders

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Minor revisions:

1) Although the paper is clearly written some minor editorial mistakes should be taken care of. I highlighted these and commented on them in the Pdf because in the absence of page and line numbers it would have taken a longer to describe them all.

2) Results- Types of control:
When the authors conclude that control means different things to different women I expected they would describe their findings within the concepts of control as described by Green and Baston (Feeling in control during labor: concepts, correlates, and consequences. Birth. 2003 Dec;30(4):235-47). I think this would strengthen their findings.

3) Discussion-Birth plan
In the discussion section the authors conclude that the birth plan would need major revisions. To me this was not a clear conclusion derived on the data presented. I did not read anywhere that women mentioned the birth plan to be insufficient even if some women did not see its value.

Secondly for a reader not familiar with an UK birth plan it is completely unclear what the content is, and why it has a negative image. So I would suggest the authors restrict their comments to advice that any birth plan (in whatever country) should consist elements as described and derived from the ODSF.

Furthermore, it might also be important to mention that these elements can be presented to women not only by means of a birth plan but also by using other methods (for instance E-health modules or other electronic decision aids or prenatal group care).

4) Discussion-Knowledge
The authors describe that although most women attended antenatal classes they were not prepared for making decisions needed during labour. The authors suggest that their lack of understanding of pain and pain relief is caused by the way information is currently presented and therefore women do not gain enough knowledge to be able to make informed decisions.

However, the data presented did not show women to have a lack of factual
knowledge but more having difficulty with the process of combining existing knowledge with their values in a context of uncertainty about how the birth will turn out to be.

5) Conclusion

Most of the advice presented in the conclusion (provide information in accessible way, learn women to develop expectations and preferences as well as new skills to make decisions) cannot be directly derived from the data as presented. As far as I understood women were not asked how midwives could have supported them better in their decision making. Therefore the conclusion should be limited to the last sentences starting with “based on the findings of this study ….” untill “….unpredictable event as labour”.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**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 I have no competing interests