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

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Reviewer: Nicky Leap

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Congratulations to Joanne Lally and her colleagues on the way in which this paper has been revised. The study is now presented and discussed in a way that synthesises the research findings with relevant literature. Quotations are used to bring the arguments and conclusions to life and the important messages from the research are cohesive. Pertinent questions are posed for all involved in maternity care provision and childbirth education.

There are still minor editing revisions needed and a thorough review of the use of commas and sentence construction in order to ‘polish’ this paper before final publication. I have listed some examples. There are also a few sections of text in the ‘Findings’ that I suggest should be moved to the ‘Discussion’ section.

There are no Major Compulsory Revisions that need to be addressed before publication.

MINOR ESSENTIAL REVISIONS

1. THE ABSTRACT
   Methods: Write 6 as six

2) CONCLUSION: First sentence
   This study suggests that the current approach of antenatal preparation in the NHS, of
   asking women to make decisions antenatally for pain relief in labour needs reviewing.
   A comma is needed after ‘labour’ in this sentence if the comma after NHS is to stay.

3) CONCLUSION 2nd sentence
   ‘It would be more beneficial to concentrate efforts on informing women, and
   engaging them in discussions around their values, expectations and preferences and how these affect each specific choice, rather than to making firm decisions in advance of such an unpredictable event as labour.’
   1) Remove the comma before the first ‘and’
   2) The end of the sentence should be changed to fit with the stem. I suggest: … rather than expecting them to make firm decisions in advance…
4) KEY WORDS: all in lower case

5) BACKGROUND 2nd paragraph, 3rd sentence:
‘A patient’s expectations’ should be: A patient’s expectations but consider revising the word ‘patient’ and substituting ‘person’ given that the rest of the sentence is about pain relief in labour where women are not patients.

6) Under heading DECISION MAKING 2nd paragraph;
The sentence needs to follow through on the plural [when they were still]:
‘Many, including Pauline, found it difficult to determine how they could actually make decisions for labour when she was not entirely sure what to expect.’

7) Under ‘TYPES OF CONTROL DURING LABOUR’: 3rd paragraph
Delete ‘among women’ and insert commas around ‘for example’ in the following sentence
Women had formed opinions about which pharmacological options of pain relief would reduce the control they had over their own bodies, but these views varied among women. Mary for example identified...

8) Next paragraph
A comma after Lynne, and there is a verb missing [eg thinking] in the second part of this sentence after ‘whilst’:
Some women, like Lynne saw Entonox (nitrous oxide and oxygen) as providing some pain relief whilst allowing them to remain in control, whilst administration of pethidine would diminish their control.

9) Next paragraph
‘Naomi comments…’ Change to past tense for reporting on findings.

10) DISCUSSION paragraph 3
Suggest this sentence is re-written as it is a bit clumsy - maybe put the examples in a separate sentence or after a semi colon:
‘Leap and Anderson acknowledge that most women are fearful of pain in labour, but information such as contractions only lasting up to a minute and her body being able to produce pain killing hormones to help her cope may ease these worries as she approaches labour[39].’

11) Some commas would help the flow of this sentence:
As well as information women need to be aware of the support both emotional and physical and the advocacy role that midwives can provide to help them achieve
the
labour and birth they want[40].

12) ‘Identify’ needs to be ‘identifying’ [or remove identify] in this sentence and commas useful around however:
‘This however could give rise to tension between, on the one hand, women identify
favouring a ‘wait and see approach’ since there is always uncertainty around
preparing for labour and, on the other hand, professionals wanting to know what
strategies women intend to use to ensure they are fully prepared.’

13) Next sentence: consider ‘regards’ rather than ‘is regarding’
‘The second issue that arose is regarding gaps…’

14) Next paragraph;
‘NHS class’ needs to be NHS classes

15) DISCUSSION 6th paragraph
Tenses: ‘will’ not ‘would’ in this sentence:
‘It is not enough to merely offer an evidenced based information tool in the hope
that informed choice and decision making would automatically follow [47].’

Consider breaking into two sentences or using a semi-colon in the sentence
starting ‘this information sharing…’

Conclusion
Last sentence – see previous comments regarding wording in Abstract

DISCRETIONARY REVISIONS
1) Under heading ‘DECISION MAKING’ 5th paragraph starting ‘There are several
ways…’
This information and referencing in regards to birth plans is not ‘findings’ and the
whole paragraph needs to be moved to the Discussion section where it supports
discussion about the findings about birth plans

2) Under heading ‘DECISION MAKING’ last paragraph
Consider moving the introductory sentence to the Discussion section as it is not
findings but needs to be part of the discussion of findings related to relationships
with caregivers:
‘Generally a good relationship with caregivers is a strong predictor of a positive
experience of childbirth, including feeling that caregivers involve them in
decisions
about their care [33]

3) Under ‘TYPES OF CONTROL DURING LABOUR’: last paragraph
The paragraph starting: ‘Control is a major factor in women’s overall birth experience needs to be moved to the Discussion section.

4) DISCUSSION 6th paragraph: consider deleting this sentence as it slips back into general healthcare and is not referenced or followed by examples of barriers [also the next sentence is perhaps the start of a new paragraph]:
‘Many barriers need to be addressed – both organisationally and attitudinally among both healthcare professionals and patients alike.

5) Fourth paragraph from the end of Discussion.
This sentence implies that birth plans only relate to women giving birth in ‘delivery suites’. I’m sure your comments relate to the need to share birth plans with the woman’s care givers in birth centre and home birth settings as well.
‘If such elements are incorporated into antenatal education and the revised birth plan which can be completed and updated throughout pregnancy is then shared with the delivery-suite staff, it could go some way to ensuring that each woman’s values and preferences are considered during labour by those supporting her.

6) Next sentence: Such efforts can never ‘ensure’ – suggest re-writing so that a situation is enabled or optimised [remove comma after and]:
It would ensure she subsequently gets the support and, the pain relief that is appropriate for her in the context of the actuality of experienced labour.

7) DISCUSSION: last paragraph
Consider rephrasing ‘who at the time of the interviews was of multiple parity’ to something that uses language that fits with how women would have perceived the researcher, eg: …who has experienced labour and birth herself (twice or three times or on more than one occasion or whatever). I think people will still question whether the researcher’s experience of pain and pain management/relief in labour may have impacted on the discussion!

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.