Reviewer's report

Title: Public Views of Acceptability of Perinatal Mental Health Screening and Treatment Preference: A Population Based Survey.

Version: 1 Date: 30 August 2013

Reviewer: Lisa Segre

Reviewer's report:

Summary:
This research utilized data provided by a computer assisted survey to assess the general public's views about screening perinatal women for depression as well as to assess their treatment preferences. The survey was conducted in Alberta Canada, and included 1207 respondents. The authors have presented a unique data set which has the potential to make a significant contribution to our understanding of the public's views.

Compulsory Revisions
The major concern with the study is the demographic composition of the sample. As noted by the authors, almost half (44.6%) of the respondents were in the age group of 45-64 which is normatively beyond childbearing age. The authors do not make a compelling argument for assessing the views of the “general public” particularly older adults who are no longer having children. It would seem that a survey focusing on adults of childbearing age would be more appropriate.

Although this criticism seems unresolvable, in the sense that the survey is already complete and there is not much that can be done to revise the “age of the sample,” the authors might consider providing a rationale for why this assessment of the general public is relevant. For example, the authors might consider examining the theoretical framework of Fishbein and Azrin (Theory of Planned Behavior), which includes normative views as one component of the model predicting attitudes and behavior or individuals (e.g. whether or not they view depression screening positively and whether they would complete a depression screening).

A second major concern is the authors statement: “No studies have examined the acceptability of perinatal mental health screening with in the North American context where routine screening is not widely practiced, and yet this knowledge is critical for informing successful implementation of standardized screening.

There have been several U.S. based reports which can be accessed through google scholar using the following keywords; e.g., Feinberg, E., Smith, M. V., & Naik, R. (2009). Ethnically diverse mothers’ views on the acceptability of screening for maternal depressive.

There is also a second survey of nurses done by Cheryl Beck and reported in MCN in 2010.
These are only two studies; and while they are indeed difficult to locate, the statement that no studies have been conducted in a North American context is false.

Again, providing these prior studies does not eliminate the usefulness of your studies. Both of these studies (and likely others that have been done) assess the views of women of childbearing age. In the context of the Theory of Planned Behavior, the argument can be made that it is also useful to understand normative views of the general public, not only in predicting individual women’s views and behavior (and there are also surveys on women’s views about completing screening), but in terms of attaining broader public support for policy (you have alluded to this importance in your manuscript).

Minor Essential Revisions

The Introduction and Discussion could be more tightly organized. For example, the first paragraph of the Background section is almost one entire page long. The authors might consider a paragraph devoted to prevalence and the longevity of symptoms if treatment is not obtained (as you have already done). You might consider inserting a paragraph break in front of the sentences “In the service of providing optimal mental healthcare to childbearing families…..” Here you have shifted to screening and screening policies. Finally, as you have done, you can move to treatment (although consider removing the word “Moreover” as it seems an awkward way to begin a paragraph which should express a new and independent thought. Similarly the second page of the Introduction is run-on and could use similar reorganization.

The purpose statement for the study is confusing:

You write “The purposes of this study were to 1) determine the prevalence and predictors of acceptability of universal prenatal and postnatal mental health screening”.

I am not sure what you mean with regard to determine the prevalence …this was not an assessment study which assessed depression, what prevalence are you referring to?

Second—how do the second and third purpose statements differ?

You write: 2) Identify the first choice of help and support for perinatal mental health problems and 3) describe treatment preferences for perinatal mental health and factors associated with treatment preferences. In both you are identifying individual’s preferences?

Methods

The section “Overview” might be more aptly labeled “Survey Procedures” or “Data Collection”—Overview is a very vague label that does not help the reader to anticipate what you are about to describe.

Discussion

You demonstrate a clear passion for the results of the study. However more organization (similar to the Introduction suggestions) would enhance readers
ability to follow. Consider using subheadings in the Discussion or at least make key points—one per paragraph and make sure that there is logic in moving from one paragraph to the next. The current impression is that a lot of results were discussed and it becomes overwhelming to those of us who have not been steeped in the entire project and had a lot of opportunities to think about it.

In summary, with revisions, this article has the potential to contribute to body of empirical knowledge concerning the public’s views of mental health care for perinatal women.

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests