Reviewer's report

Title: Antenatal screening for Group B Streptococcus: A diagnostic cohort study

Version: 1 Date: 7 February 2005

Reviewer: David Isaacs

Reviewer's report:


Thank you for asking me to referee this paper. It is a 13 month prospective study, conducted in 1998-9, in a single institution. The aim of the study was to compare swabbing mothers for GBS at 31-33 weeks' gestation with 35-37 weeks, and also to compare low vaginal swabs alone with low vaginal plus anal swabs.

All the suggestions probably come under the category "Minor Essential Revisions":

The study design was good. The power calculation was a conservative one, so that although the final number of patients who completed the study (699 had all specimens sent) was lower than the calculated number needed (839), some of the results were significantly different. Of course, there might have been other differences found with greater numbers enrolled, and the authors should probably acknowledge this in the Discussion.

Throughout the paper the emphasis seems to be that there is "no consensus" on strategies. This is not really a fair way of looking at the problem. The truth is that different strategies might be adopted, depending on the prevalence of GBS. If you have no GBS then non prevention strategy is warranted. If you have lots of GBS (like the USA) then it may be cost-effective to be very thorough. What this paper is about is getting local data to inform any strategy in Australia.

Abstract: The Abstract is far too long. I am not sure of your journal's requirements, but once the Abstract is this long it will be abbreviated in sources like Medline, and will miss important details. In particular the background and methods in the Abstract contain far too much unnecessary detail.

Background: The US strategy as stated is not correct. Their strategy is not just to screen for GBS carriage at 35-37 weeks' gestation and treat all carriers with intrapartum antibiotics, but ALSO to treat on risk factors if the mother delivers before 35 weeks.

Results: In paragraph 3 it is stated that colonisation rates would have been reported as 5-7% if the results for selective broth were not included? Is that correct, or would it be 5-7% fewer reported?

Discussion: It is stated for the first time (paragraph 1, line 5) that if women with scanty or low levels of colonisation colonisation are included, the prevalence drops to about 14%. This data should be in the Results section.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests