Reviewer's report

Title: Home Deliveries in an Urban Population of Western Nepal- A Questionnaire Survey of Reasons, Childbirth and Newborn Care Practices.

Version: Date: 29 April 2006

Reviewer: David Osrin

Reviewer's report:

General

1. Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined?

The interesting question posed by the article is: what are the reasons for home birth in an urban population in a developing country? It seems to me that the article could capitalize more on this novel question.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replicate the work?

Data were collected over 2 winter months. Although there is no obvious reason why choice of home birth or care practices might vary over a year, the collection period was quite short and cannot exclude this possibility. Participants were enrolled at immunization clinics. This sampling frame may not quite be representative of the population, since it omits mothers who did not bring their infants to immunization clinics. This limitation is mentioned satisfactorily in the discussion section.

It is not clear whether the reasons for home birth were derived from an open question and then post-coded, or whether the responses were precoded. Could the authors insert a sentence or two to explain how the reasons were categorized?

3. Are the data sound and well controlled?

Within the parameters of the study, the data are plausible. The minimal attendance of mothers-in-law at birth is unusual and presumably relates to the demography of the sample women. Could the authors comment on this, as it is a surprising finding? Did most of the women deliver at their maitighar?

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

The article replicates some of the form and content of previous publications, including specific sentences and even the separation, presentation, and titles of tables. See for example Osrin et al. BMJ 2002;325:1063-6.

The particular publication cited above had a very large sample size, and because of this the results were presented as frequencies and percentages. With a sample size of about 200, however, readers might prefer to see confidence intervals for some of the more important findings.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?

Two issues deserve expansion.

First, since the article's gist is the choice of home delivery, it would be good to expand on the choices in more detail. At the moment, the article works its way through data that largely replicate findings from other studies, and then gives equal weight to the reasons for choice. I'd suggest adding a paragraph to examine the reasons in more detail. For example, the first reason is given as 'preference.' But isn't 'preference' just another word for 'choice'? It is precisely the issues that lead to the preference that the study is interested in, and the authors could expand on the reasons for the preference.

Second, since the findings largely replicate previous reports of larger studies, the unique selling point of the article is the fact that the urban situation seems so similar to the rural situation. Intuitively, this is the interesting 'unpredictable' finding of the study, and the finding in which readers might be
interested. I think that the authors should expand on this in an extra paragraph. Why should levels of skilled attendance in an urban population be so low? Is service provision adequate? What do the authors think are the actual reasons that uptake is so poor? I would go so far as to suggest that the authors consider changing the title of the article to reflect this new finding and attract the attention of readers. For example: Are home deliveries the same in urban and rural Nepal? A questionnaire

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

7. Is the writing acceptable?
Yes, with minor proof-reading

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

1. The authors have chosen most of their variables and structured the article in the same way as a previous publication. This is reasonable, but needs to acknowledged explicitly.

2. Add a paragraph expanding on the urban-rural similarity.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

None

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

1. Consider adding confidence intervals for the important results.

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

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

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