Reviewer's report

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

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 22 May 2006

**Reviewer:** Edwin van Teijlingen

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**General**
1. This study is an interesting contribution to the literature on childbirth practices in developing countries. The question is reasonably well defined, but the occasional poor use of English makes it hard to assess some of the detail.

**Major Compulsory Revisions**

**Results**
2. I am always worried if researchers managed to achieve a 100% response rate, it raises the question in my mind: To what extent was the consent truly informed, and to what extent did women feel they had to participate? I know that participation rates in maternity care research is higher in some countries and populations than other, but I wonder if the interviewers were seen as part of the health service provision, rather than as independent researchers. I would like to see some reflection on this on the Discussion.

**Sociodemographic**
3. The mean family income was + USD 90 which is over 1,000 p/a, the authors informed us that the per capita income is USD 240 p/a under "Study setting", even with a husband an wife working that makes only 480 p/a. Is the study population far more affluent than the average Nepali family? Or is the USD 240 in the study setting out of date? The reader can't check this information as it is not referenced! This needs to be addressed in the Discussion as it affects potential generalisability!

4. The authors suggest correctly that there might be some bias in the reported study as perhaps up to ten percent of women might not come for immunisation. They ignore that fact that high infant mortality rates (reported in "Study setting) mean that the proportion of children born at home will not have reached their first birth, and hence their mothers did not attend the immunisation clinic where this study was conducted.

**Tables**
5. Presentation is rather simplistic. The reader is left wondering whether observed differences between "planned" and "unplanned" home deliveries are statistically significant. The authors should be able to test for significance, and probably show some to be statistically significant with an overall sample size of 240 which is reasonably equally divided (140 versus 100).

**Minor Essential Revisions**

6. The paper needs to be better proof-read! The use of the English language needs improving. Sounds grammatically odd to ask for "reasons for childbirth", women may choose the place of birth, but they are not choosing childbirth (in this context). In other words, the main reason for childbirth is that the woman is pregnant.

Suggest new title, for example:
7. Home delivery and newborn practices in urban women in Western Nepal: A questionnaire survey.

**Abstract**
8. The authors confuse the terminology for qualitative and quantitative research methods. In the Abstract it should read: "Two trained health workers administered a semi-structured questionnaire to mothers..."
9. The Abstract’s Conclusion should make reference to the fact that whatever is addressed in terms of high-risk traditional newborn care practices needs to be done in a culturally sensitive way in the suggested community-based health education programmes.

Style
10. Percentages: the authors use “xx per cent” and “xx%” and “xx %” in the text. I would suggest “xx%”, apart from when the sentences starts with a number. ALSO the authors sometimes give no digits e.g. 58%, some times one, e.g. 11.3% and occasionally two digits e.g. 41.67%. I would have thought that rounding at one digest was the most the authors could defend in a sample this size.
11. Some mixture of UK and US English used in the text, (e.g. immunisation and immunization AND labor and labour) need to be consistent.
12. Numbers one to ten in full in the text, 11 and higher can be numbers.

Methods
13. The sentence “All the interviews were supervised the” should perhaps read “The administration of the questionnaires was supervised by the chief”

Discussion
14. I would want to see the particular finding of this study mentioned first and results on the same aspect in other studies on in the literature in general after that.
15. Not sure what a “wood knife” is, it is a knife with a wooden handle, a wooden knife or a knife used to cut wood?
16. In the same paragraph “complimented” should be “complemented”.
17. The Discussion on dressing the umbilical cord with ghee, oil, etc. does not state the obvious, namely that these substances are not sterile.
18. Infant feeding section finished with a throw-away line about “However these traditional practices may vary in other Asian countries”, as the paragraph makes no further mention to other countries, I suggest removing this sentence.

Tables
19. All percentages in Tables 1 and 3 should read maximum of one digit, i.e. xx.x%
20. Table 5 what does “precipitate labour” mean?
21. Table 1 states 240 women and Table 2 states 240 births. From the text one would suggest that it is 240 women (some might have had twins, so the number of births is perhaps higher). Again, the authors need to be consistent.

References
22. After the numbered references there are two unnumbered references, did the authors mean to include these or are they redundant?

Discretionary Revisions
23. Study design: is it possible to have a copy of the questionnaire in English on the web?
24. Perhaps a little too much detail Kaski district as the study was conducted in the city of Pokhara.
25. Reads strangely that deliveries took place in a room or inside the house, as a room is by definition inside a house?

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

Statistical review: No

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