Reviewer's report

Title: Traditional beliefs and practices in the postpartum period in Fujian Province, China: a qualitative study

Version: 1 Date: 8 December 2006

Reviewer: Debra Creedy

Reviewer's report:

General
This paper provides unique insights into traditional postpartum practices from the perspective of women, their partners and health care professionals. The study also provides a comparison of views from rural and urban Chinese participants.

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

The rationale for the study needs to be strengthened. A paragraph currently appears in the method section, whereas these arguments should be brought forward to the end of the literature review section. The justification for the study appears to be based on the findings of an unpublished Masters dissertation whereas published sources should be used to substantiate the need for the study.

The manuscript would benefit from editing to remove extraneous information (e.g., detail on procedures used to obtain consent is unnecessary. It could be assumed that ethical procedures were followed as per the Human Research Ethics Committee approval; the 3rd sentence in the data collection section that aims to justify the approach adopted should be deleted).

Results - The extent to which health professionals supported or disagreed with a traditional practice should be included in every section of the results. At times, it would be helpful to identify what is "normal practice" in regards to areas such as perineal hygiene and teeth brushing so that changes to practice in the postpartum are easily identified.

Revision is required to Tables 1 and 3. Table 1 should be heavily edited to remove extraneous words. E.g., the first 5 lines in column 3 can be deleted. I suggest that Table 3 is extended to provide more information on the rationale for the various practices identified in the study. The phrase "no obvious health effects" is not a rationale.

The discussion section requires revision. I suggest rephrasing questions used as subheadings to become statements - e.g., the subheading "why do women follow the ritual?" could become "reasons for ritual adherence". New information is provided in this section that has not be raised previously - but needs to be - such as "many members work overseas" (provide some discussion about this in the introduction), and an outline of the socio-economic changes in the region.

The conclusions in regards to the role of practitioners is not substantiated by the data presented in the paper and needs to be reconsidered. This may be a recommendation for future research but is not a conclusion of this study.

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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)

The numbered referencing system is out of sequence and should be revised before publication.

Do not use indentation in the Discussion.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
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 importance in its field

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.