Reviewer's report

Title: Oral and dental health care practices in pregnant women in Australia: a postnatal survey

Version: 1 Date: 28 October 2007

Reviewer: Sisko Honkala

Reviewer's report:

General

The article is well-written from an important topic. However, there are some points that need some attention before it can be accepted for publication. I have listed those points below.

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

METHODS-section, page 6

The sample size and response rate should be mentioned at the end of the methods section. For example the first and the last sentence from the page could be moved there, i.e. “During the enrolment period a total of 505 eligible women were approached; 455 (88%) consented and 388 (87%) returned their questionnaire. Although small numbers of responses were missing from some questions, a denominator of 388 was used to calculate the results (except in the cross-tabulation in Table3).

RESULTS-section, page 8

The second sentence “Women who returned the survey were more likely to be older (p<0.05) than non-respondents.” should be moved to be the first sentence under the heading “Baseline demographic characteristics”.

Comments to the RESULTS-section in general

There are too many short chapters in the Results-section. It would be easier to read the text if some of the titles could be omitted and the text moved under the other titles. For example in the following way:

Text in the pages 10&11 – under the headings “Education, Socio-economic status, Age and parity” – should be inside the text earlier.

“Education” page 10

- First six sentences should be moved to the end of text under the heading “Knowledge of dental practices”, page 7.
- Next sentence “Tertiary educated women were more likely...” should be moved
to the page 8, under the heading “Current dental practices”.
- The last sentence “Women who had completed secondary school were less likely…” should be moved after the second paragraph under the heading “Current dental health status”, page 8.

“Socio-economic status” page 11
- The first sentence should be moved to the end of the section “Knowledge of dental practices”, page 7.
- The second sentence should be placed under the heading “Current dental health status”, page 8.

“Age and parity” page 11
Sentences under this heading should be moved under the title “Knowledge of dental practices”, page 7.

RESULTS page 9
The text under the title “Dental habits while pregnant” does not fit to the title. The title should be modified or even omitted. This part of the text could be part of the chapter “Dental attendance…”

RESULTS page 9
“Current dental health status” –chapter would be better if placed under the chapter “Current dental practices”, page 8

RESULTS page 11
It was mentioned here that the higher parity was associated with greater knowledge of fluoridated water and fluoride preventing tooth decay. What about associations between parity and periodontal problems/knowledge about periodontal problems, parity and dental practices, parity and dental problems, parity and dental attendance? Was this analyzed?

For example, in a study by Honkala & Al-Ansari (2005), it was found that women in their first pregnancy reported having periodontal problems less often than the others did, and they had visited dentist more often during pregnancy than the others. No association was found between parity and toothbrushing frequency.

DISCUSSION page 13, lines 4-5
“…because some women simply cannot afford to maintain an adequate level of dental hygiene or regular dental visits.” Is this really true in Australia? The end is like that most probably, but is it too expensive to maintain dental hygiene by home care?

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

Page 3, second paragraph line 6
“...has demonstrated periodontal disease...” should be
‘...has demonstrated that periodontal disease...’

Page 8
Under the heading “Dental attendance...” in the 3. line “scale and clean” would be better “scaling and cleaning”. Same correction to the next page under the heading “Dental habits while pregnant”, second paragraph second line.

Page 10, under the heading “Education”, second line
“...agree the use of dental floss...” should be ‘...agree that the use of dental floss...’

REFERENCES
There should be “:” after the authors, not full stop.
e.g. 1. Mills LW, Moses DT: Oral health during pregnancy. Etc.
See the instructions for authors
[http://www.biomedcentral.com/bmcpregnancychildbirth/ifora/#references]

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 whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

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