Reviewer’s report

Title: Transition to parenthood: the needs of parents in pregnancy and early parenthood.

Version: 1 Date: 15 September 2007

Reviewer: Caroline Homer

Reviewer’s report:

General

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

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

Thank you for the opportunity to review this manuscript. The paper outlines a study that examines the experiences of mothers and fathers before and after the birth of their first baby. The study used a qualitative design

The paper is well written and is clearly set out.

The paper needs to articulate what this study adds to the literature. The authors display a knowledge of the literature in this area in the Background section but do not clearly highlight why this study should be published - what new or unique does it add?; and, how is it different to the other studies?

Some other aspects of the paper require clarification. I presume that the families interviewed antenatally and postnatally were different couples. This needs to be clearer in the paper. While it seems likely that the interviews were conducted with both the man and woman present, this need to be clear as it has implications later on in the themes about relationships and partners’ perspectives.

The use of terminology is not, in my view, contemporary for an international audience. For example, most journals have moved away from using ‘delivery’ and now recommend ‘birth’ is more appropriate. The abbreviations also need to be carefully considered (RN, MW, AN, PN). For example, MW and RM are not commonly used in all countries and their use detracts from the easy reading even when they are defined in the paper. RM is used for Registered Midwife in Australia and I was easily confused between MW and RM in the paper. The abbreviations are not frequently used in the paper and as such could be avoided altogether. Please do not refer to the baby as ‘it’ (page 6).

The method of analysis requires further description. The constant comparative method needs a reference. In addition, when reading the data analysis section is seems that the comparative analyses were not really used in this paper. Actually how a constant comparative method was used needs to be described. I am not convinced that this approach was actually used – could it have been more easily
described as a thematic analysis? The analysis is not at a deep level. The notion of saturation (page 11) requires more explanation in the Methods section – how was the reaching of saturation determined?

The section on the top of page 4 that describes discussions with managers and supervisors needs more explanation. For what purpose were these discussions held – was it to support the study or to support the recommendations or both? Was there a commitment to improve the services based on the study? Would the commitment have been there anyway given the previous research and no doubt numerous reports suggesting what changes should/could be made.

There is no real description of the models of care that were available to the women. That is, how were the services in this area provided? What options did women have for antenatal and postnatal care? Was continuity of carer provided to women? Did they have access to antenatal education or antenatal or postnatal groups? This is important in the Results section especially where issues like support from health professionals and preparation for parenting and baby care are presented. This section leaves the reader wondering what sort of model of care these women received. An antenatal group is mentioned in the Results (page 5) but not explored or described.

Explanation of the NHS pregnancy book (page 4) and Bounty packs (page 7) are required for an international audience. What does ‘non-terrestrial’ (page 7) refer to?

The themes need more exploration, depth and description. They seem to be headings or topic areas rather than themes. Does ‘support’ refers to more or less or a need for, or is it more about information? In qualitative research like this, themes are often more expansive or take the form of words from the participants. Some of the quotes in the themes also do not seem to fit. For example, the third quote in the Support section seems to be more about knowledge or information (page 4). The theme ‘information’ similarly needs more exploration and description. The theme ‘parents’ relationships’ contains a larger number of quotes. Perhaps there could be more analysis and less verbatim quotes in this section.

Aspects of the Discussion require more consideration. Would a DVD/video address what seems to be the most important issues, that is, the lack of support. Providing more information is unlikely to improve the experience for new families. A more in-depth discussion of the support needs of families and how these may be addressed needs to be included in the paper. Some analysis of the services, models or care or systems of care also needs to be included. Some of these issues are touched upon (including the need to talk about experiences as noted by participants when talking to the RM) but not explored. The possible interventions need to be described – some suggestions would be helpful so that others can actually do something rather than undertake more research that continues to measure the same outcomes.
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: Acceptable

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