Reviewer's report

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

Version: 1 Date: 1 December 2007

Reviewer: Eva Nissen

Reviewer's report:

General
The authors have interviewed 20 women cohabiting with partner and four single women ante- and postnatally to answer the question how they could be better supported during the antenatal period, particularly in relation to the transition to parenthood and parenting skills.

My major concern with this study is that it is somewhat unfocused and I do not find much knew information or any in depth understanding of the problems connected with parents' needs in their transition to parenthood.

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

The authors use the concept "supported or unsupported" referring to cohabiting or single women. It is not sufficient to use this vocabulary without delving deeper into the meaning of "support".

I miss a theoretical framework both for the study and for the process of analysing. The method section is not referenced at all (p. 3).

In the data analysis section the authors say they have done a comparative analyses of the interviews but I can not find that framework in the result section.

Sample selection (p.3) is not sufficiently described. If you make a purposive sampling, you may have asked people who do not want to participate, but they are not reported. Even in qualitative studies of this type I think it is relevant to report your sampling frame and drop outs.

Results (p. 4) It would be helpful to have a table on background variables such as socio-demographic data, age and support network (at least for the participants). It is not possible to judge the validity of the study with so little information about the participants.

I can not see the framework that is supposed to be built by the comparative analysis in the result section. You may need to analyse your data more in depth and re-structure the results so the framework becomes visible.
Discussion. In the discussion section (p. 11), the authors think their sample is saturated since no new themes emerged. Is it not possible that more themes had added to the results if you had interviewed more single mothers and more teenage mothers? Or may be the material allows a deeper analysis?

On p. 11 the authors mention the limitations of the generalisability of the findings due to sample selection excluding participants not having English as their first language. This is a big issue in health care research that non-mainstream people are excluded, especially large groups of immigrants and refugees. However, with such a small study you may discuss transferability rather than generalisability.

I miss suggestions for future larger studies to corroborate the findings and to test improvements in the health care system.

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

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
The language could be a little more fluent.

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: Needs some language corrections before being published

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