Reviewer's report

Title: Marriage, interpregnancy interval, neighborhood, and small for gestational age birth: a retrospective cohort study

Version: 1 Date: 9 October 2007

Reviewer: Judith Lumley

Reviewer's report:

General
Discussions about SGA births are often heated, with proponents and opponents arguing about different ways of defining SGA.

The paper under review is - in contrast - a thoughtful analysis of 98,330 livebirths with a focus on infants who were small for gestational age (SGA). The study was carried out in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. The paper uses the contributions of marital status, inter-pregnancy intervals - defined as short (≤ 12 months), intermediate (12 to 35 months) or long (36+ months) - and neighbourhood effects, including 'perception of neighbourhood security' and the proportion of immigrant populations as potential factors for SGA. The births were 'nested' in 49 neighbourhoods. The relatively high proportion of mothers who were not married in this cohort has been reported previously in Quebec.

The design is a retrospective cohort study: the authors make the point that the inclusion of first-born infants and residential neighbourhood characteristics has not been taken into account in previous analyses of interpregnancy interval.

The statistical analysis is described clearly and the Tables are informative, as are both the Figures.

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

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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)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

Include in the introduction:
- a brief summary about health care in Quebec,
- the quality of the perinatal data collection
- assessment of the relative homogeneity of neighbourhoods

What next?: Accept after discretionary revisions

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I have no competing interests.