Reviewer’s report

**Title:** Postnatal quality of life in women after normal vaginal delivery and caesarean section

**Version:** 1 **Date:** 14 October 2008

**Reviewer:** Soo Downe

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Postnatal quality of life in women after normal vaginal delivery and caesarean section.

Reviewer: Professor Soo Downe

October 14th 2008

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
   The question is reasonably clear

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
   Design
   p12 states that this is a case control study, but it actually appears to be a cohort study - the authors do not demonstrate that the 'controls' were matched to the 'cases' in any specific way, either individually, or as a population.

   Sample and power
   The authors need to clarify how the sample was selected (and on what criteria). How did the authors ensure that the sample was representative of the population? For example, were the 130 women selected consecutively?

   I'm not sure why the exclusions were applied, or how many were excluded after entering the study. This matters because of the risk of bias in excluding people after entry to the study.

   The authors need to discuss the implications of including both emergency and elective CS in the CS group, as previous evidence would suggest that women in these groups may experience rather different quality of life postnatally.

   It is interesting that, although the exclusions are numerous, both groups ended up with 50 women each. Was study entry stopped at this stage, and were any balancing criteria applied (ie, if one group reached 50 first, was recruitment stopped in that group until the other group reached 50? )

   Was the recruitment based on the power calculation, or was this done post-hoc? Is a 10% difference in the (overall?) SF36 the standard difference for clinical significance?
Instrument
I'm not clear why the SF36 was chosen over the MGI and MAPP-QOL. It would be helpful if the authors could explain this.

Data collection
The authors talk about interviews at two postnatal time points - but it appears that at least some data collection (such as demographics) may have been collected antenatally - can the authors please clarify this?

Tables
Table one: significance tests are not needed or appropriate for comparing sample data (See the CONSORT statement: Standard errors and confidence intervals are not appropriate for describing variability -- they are inferential rather than descriptive statistics).

ALL THE ABOVE ARE ESSENTIAL REVISIONS

Table 2: would it be possible to give confidence intervals for these data

DISCRETIONARY REVISION

3. Are the data sound?
If the questions above can be answered, then the data are probably sound.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
Again, this depends on the answers given to question 2 above

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
The authors are right in saying that this is a small-scale study and therefore can't be generalised, but some of the statements in the discussion section are rather sweeping, and imply generalisibility beyond this population. The authors need to review the discussion section, and make reference only to this sample, and/or to any hypotheses arising from the study that could be tested in larger samples selected with minimum bias.

MAJOR ESSENTIAL REVISION

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
See the response to point 5 above.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
I would like to know how the studies using the MGI and MAPP-QOL might add to or detract from the conclusions drawn by the authors of this study.
MINOR ESSENTIAL REVISION

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
Not at present - some of the issues raised above about the body of the text are also relevant for the abstract.

MAJOR ESSENTIAL REVISION

9. Is the writing acceptable?
Yes, with a few grammatical and spelling errors

MINOR ESSENTIAL REVISIONS

Conclusions

It is unusual to see a study on this topic from the Middle East, and the authors are to be congratulated for embarking on this work. However, the issues above need to be addressed before the paper can be considered for publication. I hope the authors are able to respond to these comments, and to resubmit their paper for further consideration in future.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests