

Reviewer's report

**Title:** Strategies for Recruiting Hispanic Women into a Prospective Cohort Study of Modifiable Risk Factors for Gestational Diabetes Mellitus

**Version:** 2  **Date:** 9 September 2009

**Reviewer:** Rebecca Tooher

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**General comments**

This is an important paper which focuses on optimising recruitment of a population of women who are underrepresented in research on pregnancy and childbirth despite experiencing a greater burden of disease. Facilitating recruitment of minority women into pregnancy and childbirth studies would increase the generalisability of research findings and could influence the uptake of evidence into practice particularly in minority communities.

However, in its current iteration, the manuscript lacks some information needed for readers to determine whether the strategies outlined for optimising recruitment are worth pursuing by other researchers:

**Major compulsory revisions**

1. There is no clear indication of how successful the recruitment strategy package actually was. The predicted or target recruitment goal is not reported and it is difficult to assess from the available information in the paper whether recruitment of 9.8% of all pregnant women in the Baystate Health system was considered a good outcome when according to the paper approximately 57% of the population served by the Baystate Health system are Hispanic. Furthermore, by reporting recruitment rates (percentage recruited) with a denominator of all potential women rather than potentially eligible women, both recruitment rate and refusal rate are difficult to interpret. For example, 8.8% of all potential women refused to participate, however, 45.5% of all potential women were never even approached to participate and of those who were approached 35.9% were ineligible. In fact 47.6% of eligible women who were approached refused and 52.4% of eligible women who were approached agreed.

The authors should:

a) state the recruitment target and comment on the success of the strategy in relation to this

b) report more detail about the recruitment and refusal rates and explain why they have chosen to use the denominator they have used. Reporting in both ways may be preferable.

c) on p.13 of the discussion the authors do discuss difficulties in accessing patients to request study participation. This discussion could be expanded in light of the comments above about the number of potential participants who were
never approached for participation and its effect on the applicability and generalisability of the study findings. A comment on p.11 about the use of pre-screening could be expanded.

2. By virtue of its design as a prospective cohort study it is not possible to determine whether this intensive recruitment strategy would be more effective than a less intensive strategy. It would be good if the authors acknowledged that a randomised trial of these recruitment strategies comparing this intensive package and a less intensive package would assist future researchers. Also, some follow-up qualitative research to understand why some strategies were effective may also be warranted.

Minor essential revisions
None

Discretionary revisions
1. the paper does not make a clear distinction between recruitment into the study and participation in the study. This may be a function of the study design, however, there are “recruitment” strategies described which are in fact about making participation in the study easier e.g. collection of study data from the medical record and administration of the study questionnaires by bilingual interviewers according to patient preference. It might be better to group these under a heading such as study design/protocol design.

2. on p.5 the authors describe the study protocol and refer to a baseline interview using "structured scales". Have these scales been previously validated? If not, what methods were used to ensure their validity for use in this study (I recognise that this is not the primary focus of this paper, however, it would make the reporting of the study more complete. If the authors have published this information elsewhere a comment to that effect would be sufficient.)

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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 I have no competing interests.