Reviewer's report

Title: Factors associated with breastfeeding cessation in nursing mothers in a peer support programme in Eastern Lancashire

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Reviewer: Jane Scott

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BMC Pediatrics
Factors Associated with breastfeeding cessation in nursing mothers in a peer support programme in East Lancashire

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to review this manuscript which I read with interest.

The methods are appropriately and well described however I have a major concern over the soundness of the data as breastfeeding cessation data were not available for more than half of the sample (53.6%) and that breastfeeding duration for these subjects was estimated using the feeding methods at 6 weeks, 17 weeks and 6 months. While I have worked with large databases in which the time to event for a small proportion of subjects is censored due to loss to follow-up I am unqualified to assess the statistical implication of such a large number of subjects needing to be censored and how this impacts on the calculated means and median breastfeeding durations. Given that breastfeeding cessation is the primary outcome measure of this study I think that this issue of missing and imputed data needs to be referred to a statistician for clarification.

Discretionary revisions
1. In the abstract the authors have reported that white mothers were 69% more likely to stop breastfeeding compared with non-white mothers. This has been calculated by inverting the Hazard Ratio (HR) and multiplying by 100. While it is correct it may confuse many readers unfamiliar with HRs. Readers are more likely to be familiar with the method used to calculate risk reduction and I think it would be better to say that non-white mothers were 41% less likely to stop breastfeeding compared with white mothers, which is obtained by subtracting the HR from 1 and multiplying by 100. Where HRs are greater than 1 then increased risk can be reported but where the HR is less than 1 I think the reduced risk of a group compared with the reference group should be reported. I acknowledge that this is a personal preference and leave this to the discretion of the authors and the editor as to whether this need be changed.

Minor essential revisions
Abstract
2. The word data is the plural of datum, therefore in the methods section and throughout the paper it should be written as “data were” not data was.

3. It is not clear that the range in the brackets for the mean duration is the 95% confidence interval.

Background

4. The authors state that the BFHI has helped increase breastfeeding initiation rates from 66% to 68% over the two year period from 2004-2006. This is a relatively modest increase however the tone of this sentence implies that the authors believe this to be a significant increase. The calculation of the 95% confidence intervals around these percentages would indicate whether this difference is indeed significant.

Discussion

5. The authors claim that this study supports the growing body of evidence that peer support programmes improve breastfeeding outcomes. However, as no data are given comparing duration rates of mothers participating in the Little Angels programme with mothers not in the programmes this claim cannot be substantiated with the data presented in this paper.

Tables

6. Table 4. For consistency all p values should be rounded to 4 decimal places.

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have not competing interests