Reviewer's report

Title: Duration of exclusive breastfeeding; validity of retrospective assessment

Version: 1 Date: 10 December 2010

Reviewer: Jane Scott

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This is a concise paper that provides further evidence of the limitations of maternal recall of exclusive breastfeeding duration. The methodology of the study is appropriate and generally well described and the title clearly reflects the content and aims of the paper.

Minor essential revisions

1. P2 Abstract – methods section and P4 Methods
   The authors refer to B portion of the pregnancy record. This has no relevance to readers who are not familiar with the specific pregnancy record. Reference to portion B of the record is made also on page 4 in the methods section but there is no additional information to describe the type of information collected in this portion of the record. I think it would be sufficient to say that information was collected from the pregnancy record without referring to the specific portion.

2. The abbreviation PHM is not defined in the paper

3. P3 4th line form the bottom
   It is unclear what is meant by “strict method of assessing breastfeeding”. Do the authors mean exclusive breastfeeding from birth versus exclusive breastfeeding in the last 24 hours?

4. Complementary as in ‘complementary feeds” is misspelt as complimentary throughout.

5. P5 – recall period
   The authors indicate that the recall period for the follow-up was 2 months for each visit. This was the case up to 6 months but at the 9 and 12 month visit the recall period was 3 month. Given that the retrospective data were collected at 9 months the recall period was as much as 9 months.

6. P7 Discussion
   As some studies have mothers prospectively record events using an event calendar it is worth clarifying that the event calendar was completed retrospectively. I recommend that the 1st sentence read “……maternal recall data as well as data retrospectively obtained using an event calendar”.

7. P8 7th line form the bottom
I recommend that the sentence read “most of the mothers are aware of the recommended for duration of EBF”. The use of the word “correct” in this same sentence is somewhat confusing, as strictly speaking correct data would be the true duration of EBF, whereas I think that the authors are inferring that mothers provide an answer that reflects the recommended duration. This is referred to as a social desirability bias. Similarly, the term technically correct in this context is confusing. This sentence needs to be reworded carefully.

8. P8 2nd line from bottom
I recommend that the sentence be reworded ‘….due to the authors not mentioning EBF duration specifically …’”

9. P8 last sentence
The final segment of this last sentence “making mothers not obligatory to report the actual situation” is also clumsy and confusing and needs to be rewritten.

10. Finally, while the paper is reasonably well written it would benefit from careful editing by a native English speaker as there are numerous grammatical errors, particularly with regard to the inappropriate use, or omission, of prepositions.

**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:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare I have no competing interests.