Reviewer's report

Title: Newborn literacy program effective in increasing maternal engagement in literacy activities: an observational cohort study.

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Reviewer: Cori Green

Reviewer's report:

1. This is an observational cohort study that assesses the effectiveness of the Read to Me! Nova Scotia Family Literacy Program. There is a great deal of literature to support programs starting in infancy promoting literacy, but there are few that start at birth, so this study is novel in that respect.

2. Reach Out and Read - the US literary program starts at 6 mo old and has been studied down to that age. In the background the authors state that relationship has been explored in toddlers, but there is some literature about infants.

3. Authors do not explain why parents of infants 10 mo or older were excluded, what is the rationale?

4. Authors did not describe what questions were used for the phone interview. There are many validated questionnaires about parents' activities with their children, such as the StimQ READ tool. Were questions created by the authors? Were they adapted from prior study? Should explain that.

5. One confounder I did not hear much about is whether these infants were first-born or had siblings. Reading activities are definitely affected by child order per most of the early literacy literature.

6. One limitation that was not mentioned is that there could be a selection bias-particularly int the control group. Since recruitment was by mail requests and then the ward clerk- there could be a respondent bias here.

7. Overall, this is a useful study. I agree we should be promoting literacy starting in the newborn period and the authors have shown it to be effective in terms of parental reading activities in addition to cost-effective.

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 that I have no competing interests.