Reviewer's report

Title: Population Based Trends in Mortality, Morbidity and Treatment for Very Preterm- and Very Low Birth Weight Infants Over 12 Years

Version: 1 Date: 26 December 2011

Reviewer: Rintaro Mori

Reviewer's report:

Thank you very much for this opportunity to review this important work. I respect the efforts made to collect these important data on very preterm and/or very low birth weight infants for long on a national basis. The results and conclusions are not surprising. The manuscript will benefit further refinements as shown below:

Major Compulsory Comments:

Population representativeness
How well represent the data included in this database from the national demographic data. It would benefit by having further detailed analysis on difference between data from babies not included in this network and from those included by using the Swiss Federal Statistical Office, at least gestation, gender and weight, if possible. (i.e. gestation-specific coverage)

Survival analysis
It was not clear that the end of observation is at discharge or any specific time. This is particularly important for the survival analysis. The Kaplan-Meier method was employed to test if there is any trend in survival rate. Mortality of very preterm infants is very much depending upon gestation and other risks and I wonder if the author might consider Cox regression model to adjust for gestation and other risk factors to conduct such survival analyses, rather than the stratification.

Therapies
This piece of work is descriptive and I would suggest authors calculating how much contribution to improvement in neonatal outcome (i.e. survival without major complications) by each of the therapies.

Minor Essential Revisions:

Hospital stay
Is there any change made in governmental regulation or payment system that could affect the hospital stay during the study period?

Conclusion
The first sentence of the conclusion should be examined by data from Swiss Federal Statistical Office, instead.
Follow-up data
I agree with authors that the data will have great benefits by having long-term neurological outcomes.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**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 no competing interests.