Reviewer's report

Title: The Swiss Neonatal Quality Cycle, a monitor for clinical performance and tool for quality improvement

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Reviewer: roberto bellu’

Reviewer's report:

The paper covers a very important topic and the problem is very well defined. The authors manage a neonatal network in a well defined area (Switzerland) with relatively few NICU centers, and this make the quality improvement project feasible. The methods are very well explained and the results are interesting for the neonatal community. The discussion is very comprehensive and can be useful for people managing other network. Strength and limitations of the work are well stated.

One critical point is risk-adjustment: the authors stated that this “has been simplified to reflect only the units’ individual distribution into gestational age groups”; it would be interesting and advisable to consider also adjustment with other well-known models that take into account also congenital malformation, gender, Apgar score and so on. This could be particularly relevant in a setting with relatively small number, where causal variation can play a major role in determining differences between centers (minor essential revisions).

Maybe some more comparison with other network experience on quality improvement (e.g. Vermont Oxford Network) could be useful in the discussion (discretionary revisions).

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest 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