Reviewer’s report

Title: Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder: development of consensus referral criteria for specialist diagnostic assessment in Australia

Version: 1 Date: 28 April 2014

Reviewer: Michela Jane Angela Morleo

Reviewer’s report:

Major compulsory revisions

1. The abstract needs revisiting. It should standalone, i.e. make sense in isolation. The workshop participants are mentioned in the results but not the methodology. The conclusion does not lead on from the rest of the abstract. "Statements that described other criteria for referral..." is too vague. "...similar to those recommended in Canada" but Canadian guidelines have not been previously mentioned in the abstract. Also additional details are needed, how many health professionals completed the survey? All %s should be out of the number who completed the survey, not the number who were invited to do so. Use exact percentages rather than more than/almost.

2. I think the authors need to be clearer about why this study is needed and why it should be published in this international journal. Are the authors seeking to specifically test the applicability/validity of the guidelines for use in Australia? Why do they think the guidelines not directly applicable - this needs to be much clearer. Also, why would an international audience be interested? Would an Australian journal be more relevant?

3. You should include some discussion of the numbers/percentages who selected "no comment" in order that we can have some assessment of the level of expertise of the individuals involved, as a measure of validity of the survey.

4. There is no obvious limitation section in the discussion. I would include some mention of no precise measure of how experienced or expert these individuals were.

Minor essential revisions

5. Page 4, bottom of para 1. Who are the "high risk subgroups"?

6. Page 4, top of para 2. "The varied nature of FASD presentation..." Please provide more details for an audience who may not be familiar with FASD.

7. Top of page 5, how are you defining the term "drinks"?

8. Page 5, bottom of para 1. What are the additional criteria?

9. Top of page 7, should this read four published criteria.
10. Page 7, second paragraph, when mentioned the 23 statements, should you refer to table 2?

11. Page 9, first para in results. Individuals are only participants once they participate in the study. The 139 people are who were invited to the study. All percentages should be out of the people who participate, not out of the potential pool of participants.


13. Table 1, avoid abbreviations in the table title, and define FAS in the footnotes as per other abbreviations.

14. Table 2, please define standard drinks in a footnote.

Discretionary revisions
None.

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests