Reviewer’s report

Title: Safe sleep practices in a New Zealand community and development of a Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy (SUDI) risk assessment instrument

Version: 2 Date: 28 July 2014

Reviewer: Jan Sperhake

Reviewer’s report:

The authors present an interesting approach designed for the longitudinal monitoring of risk groups for SUDI or SIDS, respectively. Overall, the paper is well written, but as a non-native speaker I’m certainly not an expert for the English language and therefore leave it to others to judge the language quality.

Major compulsory revisions

1. I would have liked it to get to know more details of the case recruitment. The authors refer to their own work on obesity in infancy for that matter. They state, that the study group (n=209) is comprised by the control group of the larger obesity study. I’ve read the paper which is a description of the methodology and doesn’t contain any results. However, the authors don’t state clearly which the control group of the obesity study might be. Who are the 209 parents participating? How large is the drop-out or non-responder rate? What’s the size of the population in question and how large is the birth rate within this population? This all comes back to the question if we possibly face a biased study group (the authors themselves state that Europeans may be overrepresented).

2. Generally, the study group is rather small. Breaking down the data into subgroups becomes harder then. For example: 8% (resp. 10%) of the mothers smoking (92% not smoking) comprises for roughly 17 mothers. Now 99.5% of the smoking mothers do not bed share with the baby – at least this is stated in the abstract (but not in the manuscript). 99.5% of 17 equal 16.915 which don’t make much sense. Perhaps I got the figures totally wrong but dealing with numbers and presenting them seems to be a weakness of the study. I therefore suggest that the manuscript should be reviewed by an expert statistician.

I’m afraid that this paper is only acceptable after the case recruitment and response rate have been clearly presented and explained. Statistics should be flawless and my concern is that they aren’t.

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:
There are no competing interests on my side. I don't know any of the authors.