Reviewer's report

Title: Management of Neonatal Hyperbilirubinemia: Pediatricians' Practices and Educational Needs

Version: 2 Date: 16 December 2005

Reviewer: Fruhling V Rijsdijk

Reviewer's report:

General

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Response Bias

Reviewer B pointed out that there is little information on how response bias could have influenced the results and whether there was response bias. The authors replied that a 49% response rate is acceptable and in accordance with many survey studies. That may well be, but I don’t think that this is an appropriate answer to the reviewers concern. I don’t think he meant that a ‘low’ response rate is introducing the bias perse, but that a bias in the ‘type’ of respondents (and therefore non-respondents) could have introduced a bias.

Although the authors mention in the Method section that information on demographic characteristics was unknown to them unless the questionnaire was returned, they do provide a table with a comparison of demographic characteristics of the total population of AAP Fellows in the US versus respondents. It shows that the respondents are pretty representative for characteristics like gender and age (a very detailed sub-classification is given for age).

However, what if these characteristics (gender, age) are not the important ones to introduce bias? It is possible that variables like SES of area and income level could be more relevant for the traits under study. If e.g. SES of area is potentially important to (1) some causes of Jaundice (e.g. inadequate liver function due to infection possibly caused by malnutrition during pregnancy or other factors) and (2) available treatment methods and time, then response bias might affect certain study parameters and this should be discussed in the limitation section.

The only information of the non-responders available would be the post-code. From these it is possible to obtain associated information like SES and income level of the neighbourhood which will of course reflect the practice area of the non-responders.

Results

Table 1: It's absolutely not clear which significance test the p-value in the last column refers to. Is it a p-value for 1 specific comparison? This should be stated in the results section and/or noted in the table. Same is true for Table 2. The p-values in Table 4, are clear.

Figure 2, pg 8, AAP recommendations are described in the text as 20, 25 and 25 TSB (mg/dL), however, in the note to the figure 2 you use ? 20, ? 25 and ? 25. Please check.
Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An exceptional article

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.