Reviewer’s report

Title: Perinatal complications and socio-economic differences in cerebral palsy in Sweden - a national cohort study

Version: 1 Date: 11 February 2008

Reviewer: Helen Dolk

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This is an interesting contribution to the small literature on socio-economic differences in cerebral palsy prevalence. The question is clear. The methodology is sound.

1. The main potential problem, which the authors recognize but I think dismiss too readily, is that cerebral palsy is ascertained from hospital discharge. They estimate this results in 75-80% of children with cerebral palsy being ascertained. I would like to see more analysis of the potential for socio-economic bias in hospital admission for children with CP.

2. Since socioeconomic status is well known to be related to preterm birth and preterm birth is a strong risk factor for CP, the most interesting result concerns the residual socio-economic association after controlling for preterm birth. Gestational age is only controlled for in three broad bands since the risk of CP increases sharply with decreasing gestational age, is this level of control enough? An unconfounded subanalysis of the effect of socio-economic status on the risk of term normal birthweight cerebral palsy would be welcome for stronger interpretation.

3. I would like to see some more explanation of the differences in prevalence by geographic location of residence in 1985 (municipal/rural etc), which I assume to be the same variable as "domicile" in Table 1.

4. The authors confine their literature review to two previous studies of this issue, one Swedish and one not. It would be fair to the reader in interpreting these results to review all the relevant literature, for example to show that the results also support the findings of two other large studies, Dolk et al 2001 in England, and Dowding VM& Barry C 1990 in Ireland.

What next?: Accept after discretionary revisions

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

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