Reviewer's report

Title: Factors associated with dental attendance and barriers to utilisation of oral health care services in a sample of antenatal mothers in north-eastern Malaysia

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Reviewer: Socorro Aida Borges Yañez

Reviewer's report:

This paper points out the importance of low dental attendance in pregnant women. No much information is available regarding this problem. Unfortunately, the study is mainly descriptive and has not a detailed statistical analysis.

Major Compulsory Revisions
Information in the methods section is missing.
1. The only information provided about sampling is the type of sampling (systematic random sample). Please include information about: sample size calculation, reference population (population frame, and representativeness of the sample.
2. The variables studied are not identified nor operationally defined. Please include.
3. It would be advisable to include the questionnaire, since length of the paper is not a problem.
4. The questionnaire asks for dental problems, however, no reference period is mentioned.
5. No statistical analysis is presented, it is necessary to include it.
6. It is recommended to perform a more detailed analysis (multivariable analysis) in order to identify the variables associated with no dental attendance.
7. No information is provided about the duration (length) of the study.

Results
The tables are basic frequency tables presenting percents.
8. No information is provided about non response rate.
9. No description for table 6 is presented in the text.
10. Was the reliability and validity of the questionnaire tested? please explain

Minor Essential Revisions
1. In the discussion section, page 8, second paragraph, third line says “data in 1998 from the states of Arkansas, Illinois, Louisiana, and Mexico” it should say “data in 1998 from the states of Arkansas, Illinois, Louisiana, and New Mexico”.

2. In Tables 1 and 4. Please clarify the meaning of MYR.
3. In page 6, last paragraph indicates “IQR”. I guess is inter quartile range, please clarify.
4. Why in table 1 household income is in 4 categories and in table 4 is in 3 categories?
5. Information in table 3 is basically repeated in the text. This table can be eliminated.

Discretionary Revisions
1. Are there any possible biases regarding the selection of study population?
2. It can be interesting if the authors also mention and discuss about the attendance rate for antenatal care of pregnant women in Malaysia (what proportion of pregnant women attend antenatal services), since the problems for no utilization of dental services can be bigger than that presented in the article.

**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