Reviewer’s report

Title: Infant Mortality and maternal age in two Sicilian districts: a retrospective study.

Version: 1 Date: 19 March 2011

Reviewer: Christy Okoromah

Reviewer’s report:

Reviews Comments on the article:
Re: 'Infant Mortality and maternal age in two Sicilian districts: a retrospective study.'

Compulsory Revisions

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
   • The research question is not clear and it appears dissimilar in the abstract and the main manuscript
   • The authors should limit the aim of the study to no three. The other two aims as stated under the introduction section especially no 1 will be additional benefits from the study.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
   • The study design is not stated. Retrospective is not a study design. This study is a retrospective cross-sectional study I presume..

3. Are the data sound?
   • The data need to be double checked by a statistician.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
   • The neither the eligibility criteria nor the outcomes of interest were clearly stated prior to commencement of the study thus introducing selection bias and weakening the focus of the study.
   • The 1st paragraph under the result section is confusing and should be clarified
   • Table 1 is very busy and also confusing. It is not clear what the p-values represent. All the tables should be represented in the standard way recommended for most journals.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
   • The discussion section is limited. There is insufficient reference to previous published local or regional data. Same observation was made regarding the introduction. Therefore the justification for the study was not strengthened by clarifying reports if any on existing literature.
6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
   • The limitations are stated but there are other methodological flaws that have been pointed out.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
   • Although the introduction section of the main manuscripts acknowledges previous studies, several statements of facts are not referenced. Reference 8-10 has some typo? error. It is not clear under the introduction and discussion sections whether there have been published literature on this question under investigation in these two regions or whether this is the 1st published work in which a case the dearth of evidence should be clearly stated as justification for the study.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
   The title does not capture the main thrust of the study, which is to explore aspects of determinants of infant mortality especially maternal age in two Sicilian districts. The purpose of the study is different under the abstract and the main manuscript, albeit more focused in the abstract..

9. Is the writing acceptable? Basically it is but needs to consider the comments/suggestions made.
   I would consider these recommendations compulsory as they will help to enhance the quality of the manuscript.

Christy Okoromah

**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:**
I declare that I have no competing interests