Reviewer's report

Title: The study of reproductive outcome and the health of offspring of UK veterans of the Gulf war: methods and description of the study population

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Reviewer: N Cherry

Level of interest: A paper whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Advice on publication: Accept after discretionary revisions

This is a straightforward report of the success of the research team in contacting members of the UK Gulf War cohort and equivalent non-deployed service personnel in order to ascertain reproductive effects that might be attributable to service in the Gulf. The paper is generally clearly written.

There are a number of areas that require attention ('compulsory revisions')

1) The numbering of the tables in the text does not correspond to the content of the tables. Table 1, as supplied, is a list of congenital malformations, but the text suggests (line 2 page 5, line 2 page 6) that it should contain response data (such as that in Table 3).

2) The reference to data within tables is in accurate. For example Tables 4 and 5 do NOT, as suggested in line 2 page 12, show that people were more likely to respond if they were older, an officer and in regular service.

3) The first reference to table 7 (last line, page 12) is before that to table 6 (line 13 page 13). They should be renumbered.

4) At a number of places it is difficult to work out the denominators. In the third paragraph on page 12, for example I think the 710 refers to responders who had tried for a child (not all responders). On page 13 line 16 it is unclear whether the miscarriages are total (or number reporting one or more) or indeed what the relevant denominator should be. These are just 2 examples. It might be wise to get the text read very closely by someone unfamiliar with the data.

5) Significance levels (p values) are scattered about the text without specifying exactly what was tested. For example at the top of page 13 (line 2) a value of p=0.07 is given to support a claim that values are similar. It would be good practice to be consistent in reporting all p values and allowing the reader to make judgements.
Competing interests:

None declared.