Reviewer's report

Title: Determinants of mastitis in a cohort of Australian breastfeeding women

Version: 1 Date: 6 January 2007

Reviewer: Suzanne Campbell

Reviewer's report:

General

Thank you for the opportunity to review this manuscript. The authors have provided a large cohort RCT of a common breastfeeding problem.
1. The question posed is new and well-defined.
2. Methods are appropriate but not necessarily in sufficient detail to replicate the work (see comment 1 below).
3. Data appear sound, some issue of recall bias (see comment 2 below), excellent response rates on telephone interview. One question about the elimination of nipple thrush from the multivariate model (see comment 3 below).
4. The manuscript adheres to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition.
5. The discussion and conclusions are well balanced.
6. The title and abstract convey what was found.
7. The writing is acceptable.

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

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
1. Consider adding details about information that was collected at recruitment and during six month telephone interview (e.g. copy of interview schedule).
2. Any control over recall bias six months post-partum? Might want to mention this as a limitation to the study. (e.g. how can you be certain it occurred at 4 weeks or 6 weeks when the mother is looking back six months?)...or did the mothers provide records of appointments, medications, hospitalizations etc.
3. Should nipple thrush be excluded from the multivariate analysis? Perhaps you can explain your rationale more thoroughly - you explain that you eliminated it due to it being significantly associated with mastitis and the inability to determine if it occurred prior to or after the episode of mastitis; however, clinically it is significant to the mother's vulnerability to mastitis- it is hard to say which may come first. Another confounding factor is the high rate of cesarean sections (and how they differed by site), which may have resulted in maternal/infant susceptibility to thrush related to antibiotic use.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
1. First sentence under "mastitis results" p. 6, take away parantheses from (as defined in this study) and leave as end of sentence.
2. Page 10, 2nd paragraph, you state "Three quarters" of the episodes, your statistic from p.7 is 71% in the first two months; either say "Approximately three quarters" or use the original statistic.

What next?: Accept after discretionary revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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.