Reviewer's report

**Title:** Regional perinatal mortality differences in the Netherlands; most prominent from 32+0 weeks gestational age onwards.

**Version:** 2  **Date:** 29 January 2009

**Reviewer:** Shingairai Feresu

**Reviewer's report:**

Major Compulsory Revisions

The author must respond to these before a decision on publication can be reached. For example, additional necessary experiments or controls, statistical mistakes, errors in interpretation

Re: "Distinct regional differences in perinatal mortality in the Netherlands, most prominent from 32 +0 weeks gestational and onwards"

Review

The paper is greatly improved, however I still have some concerns.

1. I am not sure about this new title either try another one, I think.
2. There needs to be consistency in how the 'regions' are identified in this paper, is it Northern region? region north? Most readers would identify with the former
3. Please put main cities in the map in Figure 1. We need to clearly know which region Amsterdam lies, and even in the methods where you describe the regions on page 6.
4. At the beginning were you report results from the region put in parenthesis for example Northern region (which is most rural) and Western region (which is most urban) that way the reader gets used to what the regions mean, do it once then I think it will sink thereafter.
5. On page 5 definitions of SB, perinatal mortality SB rate, why is perinatal mortality not per 1,000 live births, if you can justify your thinking?
6. On page 8, I am a little confused when you describe the five groups of preterm birth in methods last paragraph, what do you mean by without severe congenital anomalies, what do you mean by severe, and how many were in that category? do you just want to exclude all congenital anomalies? clarify further what you mean
7. On page 9 first sentence, give us the overall Northern region perinatal, and say with highest rate in ... provinces......
8. Last paragraph first sentence, need to say "significantly higher compared to Western region". Last sentence what does “full adjustment” mean- clarify
9. Discussion page 11 were you say Dutch perinatal mortality, do you mean The perinatal mortality in the Netherlands, since some of the population may not be
Dutch by ethnicity, that sentence has to be corrected

10. The discussion needs to be tightened. the points are not connected to make a meaningful story, it's like things are hanging. Examples on page 12 Treffers et al., Mackenbach et al, how do they relate to your findings, that whole paragraph and the next need to be clarified, to flow and to connect. The northern region has bad outcomes why is that, what do you postulate, what did other studies find? What do you propose to be done to resolve or at least address this situation. It can be written very clearly

11. I think the abstract will need the same adjustment, once the discussion is tightened

12. You suddenly talk about 40 regions on page 12, I thought they were 4, or is it a typo?

13. On page 13 towards the end suddenly you talk about congenital anomalies in north region, do we know the distribution of these, and what about severe/all - need to clarify.

14. Table 3 should have in footnote what each model was adjusted for as done in the response table in letter

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests’