Author's response to reviews

Title: Use of alternative and complementary therapies in labour and delivery care, a cross-sectional study of midwives' training in Catalan hospitals accredited as centres for normal birth.

Authors:

Munoz E Selles (estermuse@gmail.com)
Goberna J Tricas (jgoberna@ub.edu)
Vallès A Segalés (antonivalles@ub.edu)

Version: 2 Date: 23 July 2013

Author's response to reviews:

Reviewer 1 (summarized)

The introduction provides adequate information on: approach problem, background and justification.

We have improved the definition of CATs and specified which non-pharmacological methods are included in the midwifery-training curriculum in Spain.

There is an adequate review of the literature.

The objectives are clearly specified.

1. Improve the explanation of the methodology and sample size.
We have now described in depth the study area and the size of the sample population, which was all of the midwives who worked at the specified hospitals.

2. Improve the implications for clinical practice.
We have included more implications for clinical practice in the Conclusions section.

3. Some citations are not in English. We have revised the References section and tables.

4. The elements to selection of subjects and the inclusion-exclusion criteria are missing. It is not clear in the methods who has (filled out) a questionnaire.

The subjects of the study were all of the midwives at the specified hospitals. We have improved the description of the inclusion and exclusion criteria and specified how the questionnaire was completed.

5. In the discussion, (authors) only discussed the inclusion of public hospitals. They make comparisons with other work.
In this paper, we only discuss public hospitals because they are the only ones accredited by the Catalan health authorities as centres for normal birth. This has been explained in more detail in the Introduction. Private hospitals in Spain do not have government accreditation for care in normal birth.

Reviewer 2:

My main comments are that this study is poorly defined. The inclusion of water immersion, warm compresses and TENs etc are not usually defined as complementary therapies. I think your definition is not clear and very diverse.

We have improved the explanation of what CAT refers to in this study. We have added information about the use of TENS to relieve pain during birth. To avoid confusion, we have stated that the term CAT includes all non-pharmacological methods to relieve pain during labour, which is different from CAM.

1. There are objectives but no aim
We have included the aim of the study at the end of the introduction.

2. The methods are written like an abstract
We have extended the Methods section to make it easier to understand.

3. The major issue is there is no definition of training. How for example do you have training to apply warm compresses to the perineum?
We have explained that these therapies form part of the basic midwifery-training curriculum in Spain.

4. How were the training hours worked out? It seems that most midwives would have put down a guess as there is no training for many of these things considered to be standard midwifery care.

Spanish midwives are nurses specialized in obstetric and gynaecologic care. Midwifery training in Spain includes some CAT, such as relaxation and breathing techniques, techniques to promote mobility during labour, emotional support and the application of cold compresses to the perineum. Other CAT training must be acquired on the midwives’ own initiative, in non-state-regulated courses. This has been explained in more detail in the paper.

Other issues:

1. can you define an Autonomous Community for non Spanish readers?
We have defined “Autonomous Community” in the Introduction section.

2. How does a hospital get accredited for normal birth? Aren’t all hospitals facilitating this?

As part of current policy to provide care that is more respectful of the physiology of birth, the Regional Government of Catalonia’s Ministry of Health (the
government body responsible for ensuring universal healthcare in Catalonia) accredits maternity hospitals in the public health system that provide care in normal birth. Accredited hospitals receive public funding to improve infrastructure, promote professional training in CAT and purchase specific equipment. However, each hospital is free to decide on how to allocate the funding.