Reviewer’s report

Title: Risk assessment and decision making about in labour transfer from rural maternity care: a social judgement and signal detection analysis

Version: 1 Date: 29 February 2012

Reviewer: Jude Kornelsen

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OVERALL COMMENT; This was a well-written paper in an area in need of evidence-based attention. It contributes to our understanding of decision-making for rural practitioners in the context of transfer and transport and will nuances our understanding of a difficult phenomenon.

MINOR ESSENTIAL REVISIONS

(1) On page 5 it is noted, “A wide variation in transfer rates between similar rural maternity units has been reported [11,15] suggesting different decision making criteria are employed”. I would like to know if the variations are between communities of like size, population (and population vulnerability), isolation, and usual weather patterns. It this is not known, it is difficult to assess the usefulness of the comparison of decision-making.

(2) In the introduction, there is a lack of clarity regarding whether or not the rural services referred to in the article offered local surgical back up or did not (perhaps only relevant from an international perspective?) I recognize you suggest they did not, based on inclusion criteria in the methods; this should be made clear up front as the implications for each model of service are very different.

(3) I would like to see some discussion of the role of clinically traumatic events (either in training or practice) on decision-making thresholds (given that the clinician’s personal decision threshold is more influential).

(4) Likewise, although clinical factors were clearly dominant, I wonder how recognition of the social issues influenced the process (i.e., recognition of the financial and social costs of travel). Did interviews reveal any attention to this? Was it different between the midwives and consultants?

(5) Box 4 needs to be re-formatted; on my copy several words were truncated.

(6) There are grammatical errors (lack of second parenthesis; appropriate punctuation, typographical errors) that should be attended to through an additional proofread.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable
**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**
I declare that I have no competing interests.