Reviewer's report

Title: Safety Culture in the Maternity Units: a census survey using the Safety Attitudes Questionnaire

Version: 1 Date: 10 May 2011

Reviewer: Christian Pettker

Reviewer's report:

This is a descriptive survey of Cypriot midwives perception of safety climate and culture. This does not involve an intervention. The SAQ is a widely used and validated tool and its application to obstetrics has been well established. I appreciate the work of the authors to use this tool to assess the work of midwives in a country underrepresented in the literature. The work does not assess other domains (physicians, nurses) and is somewhat limited in scope as a result. It is very hard to get a handle on safety climate in a system from just one domain.

1) I invite the authors to include a recently published article that uses the SAQ in an OB setting (Pettker CM, Thung ST, Raab CA, Donohue KP, Copel JA, Lockwood CJ, Funai EF. A comprehensive patient safety program improves safety climate and culture. Am J Obstet Gynecol. 2011;204:216.e1-6.)

2) Do the authors have demographic data for all of the midwives in Cyprus? In order to know more about the midwives who did not respond, I am interested to know how the demographics of the respondents differs from the entire set of midwives in Cyprus. It is hard to know if this is a representative sample of midwives, or a self-selected population.

3) The major problem with this study is that the midwives surveyed all work in many different hospitals and settings. It is not clear which midwives work in outpatient settings and which work in inpatient settings. It certainly must be true that there is a variation in quality of care amongst the different settings and this survey does not really account for that. Do the older midwives typically work more in outpatient settings, or do they work more in resource-rich settings? Thus, the results that experience is associated with perceptions of improved safety culture/climate may be confounded more by the setting or the resources available.

4) I am not sure how they determined a sample size for the study. Was it powered to some primary outcome? Were there beta- and alpha-errors used?

5) The introduction is rather lengthy and the paper could be improved by more focus on the task at hand.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest
Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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