Reviewer's report

Title: Utilization of antenatal ultrasound scan and implications for the caesarean section: a cross-sectional study in rural Eastern China

Version: 2 Date: 11 August 2011

Reviewer: Tine Gammeltoft

Reviewer's report:

Major compulsory revisions
I have to say that I am not very impressed with the revision of this manuscript. In my comments to the authors I wrote that this paper fails to provide evidence for the claim that there is a causal relationship between ultrasound use and c-sections. The authors reply that the aim of the paper ‘is not to clarify the causality between ultrasound scan and CS’. Nevertheless, in the revised version of the paper, causality is still explicitly assumed (e.g., the abstract says that ultrasound scans ‘directly caused an increasing likelihood of CS’, p 10 says that ‘ultrasound scan has a direct effect on having CS’). The authors must make it more clear that what they find are associations, not causal relations. In the discussion they may then discuss how we may account for these associations – but this will basically be guesswork, as this research offers us evidence for the associations only, not how to account for them.

Minor essential revisions
I also asked the authors about the causes of the rapid increase in rates of CS in China, but I still don’t think that is properly accounted for in the paper.

Another question I raised concerned what women themselves said about their motivations for ultrasound use. The authors discuss this, but they tend to conflate women’s ‘motivations’ and the socio-economic patternings of their ultrasound use (e.g on p. 10: ‘women’s reasons for antenatal ultrasound are influenced by their socio-demographic characteristics’). It is important that ‘qualitative’ and ‘quantitative’ insights are distinguished from each other in accounting for women’s use of this technology.

I also suggested to the authors to focus the discussion section more directly on the findings of this study. They claim to have reorganized this section, but it seems quite similar to the original one.

Finally, the discussion of safety issues (in response to the other reviewer) is very long and not very clear.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being
published

**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