Reviewer’s report

Title: Does a referral from home to hospital affect satisfaction with childbirth? A cross-national comparison

Version: 1 Date: 23 March 2007

Reviewer: Karin van der Pal-de Bruin

Reviewer’s report:

General
This is a very interesting and original paper on women’s satisfaction with childbirth.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Abstract
Heading Conclusion: see remark in conclusion section

Background
1. It is stated that in the Netherlands there is a high continuity in care if the women is referred during labour. Although it may be allowed to stay in the hospital it depends on the stage of labour and on the midwife if she will stay. In practice, the midwife does not stay often resulting in a discontinuity in care. This is also coming back in the discussion and conclusion.

Methods
2. The Mackey Childbirth Satisfaction Rating scale was used to measure satisfaction. Was the translation done in such a way that does not compromise the validation? Leaving out a dimension will leave you with a scale that is not valid anymore.
3. Place of birth was divided in planned home birth, planned hospital birth and hospital birth after referral. It is stated that planned births in the hospital under care of the midwife (poliklinische bevallingen) were in the group planned hospital birth. Why were not they considered as another group as this is primary care? Meaning that if there is a referral during delivery it will become secondary care. If referral occurred were these women in the hospital birth after referral group.

Results
4. Please clarify the description of non-used cases in the analysis, especially the 61. It is unclear why they were not used.
5. It not clear how the translation of the scale was done. A description of the procedure is needed.
6. It is stated that the dimension physician is not used. Why was chosen to keep the dimension for the nurse (and change it to midwife) instead of the dimension for the physician. Could you please give insight.
7. Please explain how you compared the mean of the satisfaction scale reported by Goodman with the group under study as you have one dimension less (the physician was left out).

Discussion
8. Add discussion on difference in age, education and parity

Conclusion
9. I do not agree with the conclusion that the number of referrals during labour should be reduced. This suggest that the referrals are not indicated, which can not be concluded from this study.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Abstract
1. Heading background, last sentence: …will result in lower …. 
2. Heading results, last sentence: The lowering impact of a referral on satisfaction …

Background
3. Second paragraph: The Dutch .....expecting a normal birth ....
4. There is a more recent report on percentage of home birth and referral during pregnancy and delivery than the one mentioned by Wiegers which should be used. The reference is Anthony S, Amelink-Verburg MP, Jacobusse GW, Pal-de Bruin KM van der. De thuisbevalling in Nederland 1995-2002. Rapportage over de jaren 2001-2002. PRN/TNO rapport KvL/JPB 2005.083

5. Last paragraph: This paragraph should more clearly describe the aim of the study and its research question.

Methods
6. Selection of method, 4th line. Postpartum- was considered to be appropriate.
7. Please describe the distribution of loss to follow-up from 833 to 611 by country and place of birth.
8. Measurement: the effect on satisfaction cannot be reduced
9. Procedure: Please explain how women with a short hospital stay returned the questionnaire (direct by mail?)
10. to participate, not everybody did this systematically
11. Presents the estimates from low to high (19 - 68 and 38 - 100)
12. It is more informative the present the mean age at first delivery because of the differences in parity between the Dutch and Belgian group

Results
13. There is a striking difference in level of education. Is this explained by the oversampling of home births in Belgium (if it so that high educated women want a home birth in Belgium)? Please describe this in discussion section.

Discussion
14. It is mentioned that there is no information on referrals between first questionnaire and childbirth. Please describe the impact this may have on the results.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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