Reviewer's report

Title: Experiences of abortion: a narrative review of qualitative studies

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Reviewer: Zephne M. van der Spuy

Reviewer's report:

The authors have undertaken a narrative review of qualitative studies of women's experiences of termination of pregnancy (TOP) and their perspectives on surgical or medical methods.

Given that termination of pregnancy is an important aspect of reproductive healthcare and one which still causes considerable controversy, it is interesting to note that only 18 qualitative studies were identified for review by the authors. It is also interesting that little work has been produced in developing countries, often where the problems and the need for accessible fertility regulation and safe TOP (as opposed to unsafe, often illegal practices) is greatest.

This is an important topic and one which the authors have reviewed carefully. Only 4 of the studies offered comparisons between experiences of surgical vs medical TOP. The other 14 discussed the informants' experiences of TOP.

Results are summarised in Tables 1 and 2 and are divided, appropriately, into three main areas for presentation and discussion. The results are interesting and well presented. Choices about TOP are often made for practical reasons and are influenced by partners' attitudes. The experiences reported by the informants were influenced by the attitudes of and support from healthcare professionals. It is interesting to note the perspectives of the women requiring TOP.

The environments in which the services are provided differ somewhat, as do the attitudes of the healthcarers and the women themselves. This is also affected by local cultural and religious influences. Sympathetic counselling and support are central to a good outcome for most patients.

This is an interesting review of qualitative studies among women requiring TOP. It offers reasonable conclusions which should influence service provision. The lack of available input/research from developing countries is noted.

In my opinion this study offers valuable insights and warrants publication with only very minor corrections.

There are some typing errors which need correction.

On page 4 reference is made to 13 studies in Table 2 but 14 are included.

On page 6 data "are" not "is"

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