Reviewer's report

Title: Screening for inter-hospital differences in cesarean section rates in low-risk deliveries using administrative data. Can it contribute to quality of care initiatives?

Version: 2 Date: 7 May 2007

Reviewer: Eugene R. Declercq

Reviewer's report:

General

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

I would recommend publishing a shorter version of this article. The strengths of this article are:

• the questions raised, concerning cesarean section, are increasingly important
• it uses a large reasonably reliable dataset
• the design is careful and generally conservative
• the analysis is appropriate for the data

The areas where the article could be strengthened:

• it is very long and the authors could be more judicious in the data they present
• they could better explain how they’ve structured the analysis (i.e. their reference to a control group is not as clear as it might be
• the authors should decide what they want to focus on – a research study or a QI project. The article seems a mix of both. Might be better served splitting it into two shorter more clearly focused articles.
• the authors can drop the last two pages of the discussion on whether and why recommendations are accepted. This would seem to belong in another article
• the authors can explain further the significance of the substantial differences in datasets on induction, epidural. Why are the rates in their sample so much lower and what does that say about the findings as a whole?
• the reference to miscoding of repeat cesareans generally means an overestimate of primary cesareans. Can the authors comment on that?

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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)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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'