Reviewer's report

Title: Financing mode and expenditure related to deliveries in the 2004 Pelotas Birth Cohort Study, Brazil.

Version: 1 Date: 30 July 2007

Reviewer: Bolajoko O. Olusanya

Reviewer's report:

General

The manuscript is an important contribution to current data on health financing in the developing world. The findings in this study have shown that the Brazilian Unified Health Care System is effective in providing maternity services to the richest and most vulnerable groups in the study population.

In justifying the need for this study in the introductory section, the authors rightly compared the reported higher expenditure on health by an average Brazilian household to average households from other Latin American countries. However, I was disappointed to find that a similar comparison was absent from the discussion. I would strongly recommend that the authors compare their findings with other Latin American countries, seeing that the Brazilian health care system as portrayed by the authors is not typical of many developing countries particularly outside. In fact to what extent can the findings in this study be generalised for the rest of Brazil? It may be useful to see and possibly cite a World Bank’s report on health financing by Gottret & Schieber (eds.), 2006 relevant to this study.

In presenting their results in ‘Table 2’, the authors combined several denominators together in computing their percentages in a way that is very confusing to the reader. Moreover the data set on mean and median monthly per capita cost in R$ further compounds this complexity. Table 2 will be better understood if split into two separate tables along this line. For better clarity on the issue of multiple denominators for the percentages, a new row of ‘Total population’ can be introduced after the row ‘Had any health expenditure with the baby’, so as to relate the percentages to the column total.

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

1. Results: Revise Table 2 and split into two

2. Discussion: Compare results with other Latin American countries
Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

1. Results: Paragraph 4, line 1 – ‘7% of mothers’ – Not in Table

2. Results: Paragraph 5, line 5 – ‘(Table 3)’ – Move to line 4 or repeat after ‘4.6% of mothers’ for better clarity.

3. Results: Paragraph 6, line 6 – ‘Only 9 among 3197’ – Not in Table

4. Discussion: Paragraph 2; line 6 – ‘In that study’ – Which study?

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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.