Reviewer's report

Title: Can mothers rely on the Brazilian health system for their deliveries? An assessment of use of the public system and out-of-pocket expenditure in the 2004 Pelotas Birth Cohort Study, Brazil

Version: 2 Date: 7 February 2008

Reviewer: Josephine Borghi

Reviewer's report:

- Minor Essential Revisions

1. Abstract: Nearly 50% of births were 'by the SUS?' - should this read: financed by?
2. Page 3, line 4: Of, of (repeated)
3. Page 4: 'Generally, access to health services through the SUS is high, with less than 5% lack of access' - how is lack of access defined here? -
4. Page 10 second to last line, need to add: 'financed by' the SUS
5. Page 11: 'The importance of the role played by the SUS is highlighted by the fact that the direct cost of a delivery, when paid directly to the hospital, was similar across the economic scale (although direct payment was practically unobserved among the 40% poorest), different from what was reported in a low income country setting [13], where a delivery among the rich costs, on average, ten times more than among the poor.'
   5.a. It is not clear how this sentence highlights the importance of SUS, or what is meant by 'importance' in this sentence. The meaning of this sentence needs to be clarified.
   5.b. Despite what is reported in reference 13, there are numerous studies from low income countries that have shown that the poor pay as much as the rich for deliveries, as there is no system in place to identify and protect the poor from such payments.
   5.c. Is the Canada reference relevant? In your study you report little difference in amount paid for c-section or vaginal delivery.
6. Table 4 some women reported as private financing yet 5% have a health
plan with hospital cover? This is counter-intuitive. Would be helpful to explain.

7. Table 4: Need to add labels to explain what the numbers are.

- Discretionary Revisions
1. The authors make no mention of payments for the baby in discussion, yet this features as an important part of the results. Are there any implications from these findings, how should they be interpreted?
2. How should the reader interpret the finding that over 20% women with health plans covering hospitalisation are still financed by the SUS? It would be helpful for authors to shed some light on this.

**What next?:** Accept after minor essential 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 no conflict of interest.