Reviewer's report

Title: Cost Analysis of the Dutch Obstetric System: Home birth compared to short-stay hospital birth - a prospective non-randomised controlled study

Version: 1 Date: 26 May 2009

Reviewer: Wendy Christiaens

Reviewer's report:

REVIEW FOR
Cost Analysis of the Dutch Obstetric System: home birth compared to short-stay hospital birth – a prospective non-randomised controlled study
Reviewer's report
Reviewer's report: Minor Revisions

1. Title and abstract
Perhaps Methods should be described with a little more detail in the abstract. First sentence of the Results section of the abstract “… were transferred to the hospital to an obstetrician.” Could be formulated in a better way.

2. Background
In the background section the authors describe the maternity care system in the Netherlands and argue why the estimation of costs adds to the existing literature.

3. Methods
Methods are described in a proper way. Although a rather complex methodology is used, the authors succeed in making it transparent to the reader. The same accounts for the results section.
Sample: “… with independent midwives participated in recruiting the study population.” In my view, study population is not the right wording. Rather ‘respondents’ or ‘sample’ are in place. (see also title of table 3).

4. Results

5. Discussion
The most relevant shortcomings are mentioned in the discussion. However some points should be addressed more explicitly. For example the limitations of means substitution are not really mentioned. Also, what about generalisability? Were the 100 midwifery practices selected at random? Authors say “recruitment for the study took place on a national level” (in the Method section), but what does this mean? Does this mean the results are representative for Dutch women intending to give birth at home or with a short stay?
In the discussion, authors do not mention policy implications, or implications for the organization of Dutch maternity care. What do the findings mean in the light of the recent tendencies in Dutch maternity care (e.g. declining home births)?

In general this manuscript offers valuable new information about the Dutch maternity care system. It is well-written and structured in an adequate way.

**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.