Reviewer's report

Title: A Review of the Methodological Features of Systematic Reviews in Maternal Medicine

Version: 1 Date: 13 September 2006

Reviewer: Judith Lumley

Reviewer's report:

General
1. This review of systematic reviews includes reviews in maternal medicine from 2001-2006.
2. The authors’ description of their design, data sources and methods are very clear and explicit
3. The definition of the content is important to medical and obstetric staff across a wide range of health care settings, and combines two areas: the care of women with medical complications of pregnancy and complex pregnancies related to an abnormal fetal or obstetric factor.
4. Their description of the search and data abstraction would allow replication of the study or a subsequent update.
5. There is a very clear account of the potential limitations of the systematic review.
6. The comparison of Cochrane and non-Cochrane reviews shows the methodological issues where more reinforcement/support is required.

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

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

1. Include a rationale for restricting the searches to 2001-6
2. Comment on the possible/likely impact of missing studies in this context.
3. Provide a more explicit account of the importance of searching reference lists
4. The pie-chart (Figure 2) was not very easy to read (except for the four major segments and might have been more readable as a Table

What next?: Accept after discretionary revisions

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare I have no competing interests.