Reviewer's report

Title: Factors related to late entry to antenatal care in New South Wales, Australia

Version: Date: 29 April 2006

Reviewer: Jane Sandall

Reviewer's report:

General

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

This paper aimed to investigate factors related to late entry to antenatal care in NSW drawing on data from the NSW Health Outcomes Database. The Anderson Health Seeking Behaviour Model was used to determine explanatory variables. The authors have used several definitions of late entry into antenatal care from WHO, UK, USA and Australia; these vary from 12 weeks to 20 weeks. The findings of the paper would be clearer if they used the Australian definition both in the background and the analysis. The reference cited for UK guidelines has now been updated (NICE (2003) Antenatal care: routine care for the healthy pregnant woman, National Collaborating Centre for Womenâ€™s and Childrenâ€™s Health Commissioned by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence, London. http://www.nice.org.uk/)

It would be helpful for the authors to consider and summarise the evidence as to whether delayed entry into ANC is an independent risk in its own right or whether it is a ‘marker’ for other risk factors such as socio-economic status, lifestyle, smoking etc.

It would be helpful for the factors outlined on p4/5 to be summarized in a Table under the headings of the Anderson model. How these categories are created needs to be made clearer and the rationale for the choice of reference category. Some definitions are not clear outside Australia. The terms used in the text must match up with those used in other parts of the paper. i.e. ‘None indigenous Australian born™ is used in the text and ‘non-Aboriginal Australian born™ in Table 3.

Table 1 is unclear. The first two columns are very useful. But the purpose of the last two columns is unclear as is the explanation at the bottom of the table. The authors need to explain why two methods of regression were used. The discussion of collinearity on p5 should say which variable was excluded.

The reporting of Table 2 is confusing, as the exact percentages provided in the table are not used in the text. It is unclear what Table is being referred to in the text discussing the bi-variate analysis on p6. The linear regression model explained 12.5% of the variance, this is not a substantial amount and the authors need to discuss what other variables could/should be in the model. The analysis and the discussion are unclear and attention needs to be paid throughout the article to language and grammar.

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)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

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

Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.