Reviewer's report

Title: The feasibility of using the Mother-Generated Index (MGI) as a Patient Reported Outcome Measure in a randomised controlled trial of maternity care

Version: 2 Date: 16 May 2015

Reviewer: Mechthild M. Gross

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the paper “The feasibility of using the Mother-Generated Index (MGI) as a Patient Reported Outcome Measure in a randomised controlled trial of maternity care”.

General comment

Due to the complex nature of the MGI itself and the study with various collection points, several aspects need to be specified. If there is an issue with the overall possible amount of words I would strongly recommend to split this paper into two. My general impression is that the current paper presents two studies in one: One part relates to the validity of the psychometric measures and the respective further instruments. The second part considers the thematic material. I would recommend to specify these two topics each in a separate paper and to add a third – new - paper as an overall synopsis focusing on PROM.

Specific comments

Introduction

The MGI is a complex tool which consists of three assessments within one collection point.

The authors highlight the importance of patient-centred outcomes which is considered to be very appropriate. The introduction reports the importance of patient-centred outcomes, the need for health related outcomes in maternity, and the urgency to develop a core outcome set across women’s health. This “holistic” approach is appropriate but it could be complemented with some specific features. The authors may refer to the ongoing work in the comet initiative (http://www.comet-initiative.org/). Furthermore it would be interesting for the reader to know the existing activities in obstetrical core outcome research (Devane 2007).

Line 5: Typo reliability
Line 8: I would recommend to avoid the term “tested” (last word in the line) but prefer to write “apply” or “used”.
Line 12: If you say in line 9 that you describe (!) the incorporation of the MGI then you should not say that you test something. Testing involves several psychometric features. This is more than just describing. I would move this sentence to the discussion.
The study aims will need some further specification if you want to submit your paper to a journal which is dedicated to research methodology (see below).

Methods
Page 6:
Line 3: Please reference where the reader can get further information of the SHIP trial.
Line 1: It is stated that participants were surveyed at four time points. Are the current results a selection of the initial data collection? How relevant is this? I found it confusing because further down “only” two time points are of relevance anymore. Might be my fault…. Just a thought.
Line 5 et al.: I am a little bit undecided if it would not make sense to explain the various MGI characteristics already in the introduction. It is such a complex instrument. Maybe it is better to get the reader aware of it asap.
Line 14: Previous research on psychometric properties of the MGI should go to the introduction.
Page 7:
The paragraph on “Assessing the feasibility, acceptability, validity, and outcomes of the MGI within an RCT context” reads like a specification of the initial research aims. Some of these points may be used when revising the research questions.
I think the method section would benefit from a section which introduces the various tools and a separate section on data analysis. Please specify in this section which tests were applied according to Table 2.

Results
Page 8:
Please explain CTU.
Line 12: Steps 2 and 3 are confusing as MGI was administered only twice. Please clarify relevance and specify numbers (“picked up well”).
Page 9:
Line 7: Please specify your results and report results of validating questionnaires.
Line 18-20: Description of details of the study should be moved ahead. Details on EQ5D-3L should go to the new paragraph in the methods which introduces all the tools.
Here another baseline results section suddenly starts. This could be the baseline results section of a second paper reporting the thematic material of two time points. Some content related subtitles would be helpful.

Discussion
The advantage of two separated papers will be that the authors may introduce and discuss their study in relation to specific psychometric and thematic studies. This paper lacks the discussion with studies which also had applied various tools when using the MGI.

Conclusion
Please avoid the term longitudinal assessment. Collecting data at two points in time does not meet the requirements of a longitudinal assessment.

Final comment
I got the idea for separating the paper into two (respective three) only while I was commenting on the results section. Hope my comments are of little help.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:
no conflict of interest