Reviewer’s report

Title: The role of haematological indices in predicting early iron deficiency among pregnant women in an urban area of Sri Lanka

Version: 0 Date: 31 Aug 2018

Reviewer: Reviewer 2

Reviewer’s report:

PEER REVIEWER COMMENTS: To view the full report from the academic peer reviewer, please see the attached file.

REVIEWER COMMENTS FROM REPORT: The objective of this study was to evaluate the role of red cell indices in the identification of early iron deficiency.

The need for the study was to find a cost effective way of identifying early iron deficiency.

The study has been well conducted, although numbers are low, with only 90 women analysed.

Serum ferritin was used as the gold standard test for comparison. The specificity, sensitivity and accuracy of haemoglobin and each red cell index was determined.

Haemoglobin was found to have low sensitivity, with only 15.9% of those with serum ferritin under 30 ug/l being anaemic (defined as Hb<11 g/l).

MCHC was found to have the best profile, with higher sensitivity and accuracy than the other markers.

The manuscript is well written, but a few changes need to be made:

The figure needs a legend and explanation.

At the end of the discussion, the authors state that MCHC had the highest sensitivity, specificity and accuracy, when in fact the specificity was the lowest.

The capitalisation in the references needs to be consistent.

The document needs to be checked carefully for grammar. There are occasional mistakes, for example, "was" instead of "were" in line 10 of the abstract.

ADDITIONAL REQUESTS/SUGGESTIONS:
It would be worth validating this study with larger numbers.

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**  
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Does the work include the necessary controls?**  
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?**  
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?**  
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

Not relevant to this manuscript

**Quality of written English**  
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

**Declaration of competing interests**  
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?
6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?

If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

This reviewer has been recruited by a partner organization, Research Square. Reviewers with declared or apparent competing interests are not utilized for these reviews. This reviewer has agreed to publication of their comments online under a Creative Commons Attribution License attributed to Research Square and was paid a small honorarium for completing the review within a specified timeframe. Honoraria for reviews such as this are paid regardless of the reviewer recommendation.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal.