Reviewer’s report

Title: Is postpartum depression a homogenous disorder? Time of onset, severity, symptoms and hopelessness in relation to course of depression.

Version: 2 Date: 14 July 2014

Reviewer: Martin Kammerer

Reviewers report:

Kettunen et al have submitted a nicely written paper (Submitted: 2014-04-17) presenting data of a good and useful sample size (n=104 mothers with SCID diagnosis of postpartum depression (PPD) and n=104 mothers without SCID diagnosis of PPD). They report that their study was designed to “…assess the course of depression, time of onset, severity of symptoms, symptoms profile and hopelessness”.

Their research questions address the important issues of whether the two groups under study differ regarding
a) “…severity of symptoms, symptom profile and hopelessness
b) number of “prior depressions”
c)”…whether recurrent depression differs from the first depression episode”
d) “…whether PPD with depression during pregnancy is different from PPD without depression during pregnancy”
e) “…if pure PPD (mothers who previously not have had depressions or only PPD) is different from other types of postpartum depression.”

At this stage of the paper the description of the methodology does not provide enough information necessary to establish whether sampling needs to be considered convenience sampling or whether it can be considered systematic sampling.

The method to establish the DSM diagnosis of PPD is clear. The authors used the SCID interview which is “gold standard”.

However their method to establish the diagnosis of depressive episodes in pregnancy or outside pregnancy is not so clear. The authors write: “…The groups were asked questions about the onset of depression and experiences of previous depressive episodes in semi structured interviews. Previous episodes were classified into different groups as follows: episodes without connection to pregnancy and postpartum period, episodes during pregnancy, episodes during previous pregnancies and previous postpartum depression” It remains a bit unclear which instrument they used for this purpose.

Furthermore they do not explain clearly enough whether and how they differentiated between participating women with different numbers of pregnancies and childbirths and respective different outcomes.
Another point to clarify is the SCID based assessment of associated symptoms of depression with participants not fulfilling the entry criteria of a diagnosis of PPD.

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

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.