Author's response to reviews

Title: A high rate of histological chorioamnionitis is associated with rural and remote residence in the Northern Territory, Australia: A cross-sectional study.

Authors:

Cecelia M O'Brien Dr (cecobrien@gmail.com)
Susan Arbuckle Dr (san.arbuckle@health.nsw.gov.au)
Sujatha Thomas Dr (Sujatha.Thomas@nt.gov.au)
Jurgen Rode Professor (jurgen.rode@nt.gov.au)
Robin Turner (r.turner@unsw.edu.au)
Heather Jeffery Professor (heather.jeffery@sydney.edu.au)

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Author's response to reviews: see over
20th of March, 2014

Peter O’Donovan (Executive Editor)
BMC – Pregnancy and Childbirth
BioMed Central
236 Gray’s Inn Road
London WC1X 8HB
United Kingdom

Dear Peter O’Donovan,

On behalf of my colleagues, I would like to submit our original research article titled ‘A high rate of histological chorioamnionitis is associated with rural and remote residence in the Northern Territory, Australia: A cross-sectional study’ for consideration in the BMC-Pregnancy and Childbirth journal.

The Northern Territory has the highest rates of perinatal morbidity and mortality in Australia. Aboriginal women have increased rates of preterm delivery, low birth weight and fetal death, along with increased rates of maternal morbidity and mortality in comparison to non-Aboriginal women. Interestingly, placental histopathology has not been examined in this high-risk population.

This is the first study to comprehensively describe the prevalence of histological chorioamnionitis, fetal inflammatory response and vascular pathology in this high-risk population in Australia.

After adjusting for confounders, histological chorioamnionitis and fetal inflammatory response was significantly associated with rural or remote residence. Living remotely may represent the impact of systemic disadvantage, predisposing women to placental inflammation, rather than related to access to antenatal care or Aboriginality alone.

This original research has been conducted under the supervision and guidelines of the Human Research and Ethics Committee in the Northern Territory with approval number 08/86.

The BMC-Pregnancy and Childbirth journal has previously published important epidemiological data outlining that rural and remote residence is an independent risk factor for poorer perinatal outcomes in the Northern Territory. This study contributes to further insight into the factors that underpin the high rates of
perinatal morbidity and mortality in the Northern Territory, with important correlations also found with rural and remote residence.

We have used the STROBE checklist for cross-sectional studies and our article meets all the criteria. This research article has been read and approved by all the authors and have all contributed to the preparation of this manuscript. The contents of this manuscript is our original work and has not been published, in whole or in part prior to our submission to the BMC – Pregnancy and Childbirth. There are no restrictions to copyright or open access requirements.

The total cost of the project was $11000 AUD. Partial funding ($5000) was received from the Private Practice Trust Fund based in Darwin, Australia. The rest of the project was self-funded by the primary researcher.

The submission package attached includes:
1. Microsoft word document including the manuscript, tables, references, acknowledgements, author contact details, keywords and abbreviations
2. Three additional PDF files corresponding to Figure 1,2 and 3 have been uploaded and are colour graphical figures

Further changes to the manuscript were requested after original submission on the 19th of March.

The changes are as follows:
1) Movement of these sections to after the conclusions and abbreviations and before the References section.
2) Further discussion and detail regarding no competing interests, financial or non-financial and has been moved to Page 21.
3) Author’s contributions were present in the original document but rechecked to meet the current guidelines outlined for the journal and moved before the References section (Pages 21 – 22)
4) Acknowledgements were present in the original document but rechecked to meet the current guidelines outlined for the journal and moved before the references (Pages 22 – 24).

I would like to thank you for your time in reviewing our original research article and we look forward to the feedback we receive from the review process. Please do not hesitate to contact me at the above address if you require any further information.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr Cecelia O’Brien
Primary Researcher
Obstetric and Gynaecology Trainee