Reviewer's report

Title: Knowledge, attitude and experience of episiotomy use among obstetricians and midwives in Viet Nam

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Reviewer: Alice Rumbold

Reviewer's report:

This paper presents the results of a survey of obstetricians and midwives in a large obstetric hospital in Viet Nam regarding their views on and practices around episiotomy. The aim is clear and the methods are appropriate, although further clarification regarding how participants completed and returned the survey would be helpful. Data are presented in one large table, which could be broken up into two or three tables to improve readability. The discussion is clearly written but does require a comment on the potential limitations of the study. The manuscript would benefit from further editing as there are some grammatical errors.

Major compulsory revisions
1. Discussion: include comment on the possible limitations of the study, such as the potential for social desirability bias in responses, particularly if there were no processes to ensure the confidentiality of survey responses (see point 4 below).

Minor essential revisions
2. General comment: The manuscript needs further editing, as there are quite a few spelling errors and grammatical errors related to either incorrect words, missing words or incorrect tense, for example line 54 “using” should be “use” and lines 60-62 should be “With a view....”.

Methods
3. Please confirm that the total number of eligible staff (n=168) is correct, as this seems a small number (particularly the number of midwives) for a hospital with approximately 20,000 births per year.

4. Include more detail on how eligible staff members were approached about the study and given a copy of the survey. The manuscript states that the survey was “distributed through each of the hospital departments that included staff who provided care during labour and delivery”, however, this is vague and as no identifying information was collected it remains unclear whether all eligible staff actually received the survey. For example, was a personal cover letter addressed to each individual staff member used? And was it a paper based survey?

5. Include further detail on how participants returned the survey, including the processes followed to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of participant responses (see also point 1 above).

6. What statistical tests were used to compare the mean knowledge scores
between obstetricians and midwives?

Discussion

7. Include comment on whether the sample is representative of the total eligible sample, in terms of gender and experience.

Discretionary revisions

8. In the introduction, it would help to give some background information about how common episiotomy is in South East Asian countries and contrast this with figures from other countries where selective episiotomy is the norm.

9. For ease of reading, consider dividing Table 1 into two or three separate tables.

10. The authors suggest that concern about 3rd and 4th degree tears was the primary reason for episiotomy reported by both obstetricians and midwives, however, obstetricians were significantly less likely to say this than midwives (42.6% vs 63.6%, p=0.03). Does this mean that obstetricians were more likely to report a range of reasons for episiotomy? And does this suggest that training may need to be tailored differently for obstetricians and midwives?

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: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests