Author's response to reviews

Title: Exploring the intangible costs associated with stillbirth: a structured review and synthesis of the evidence

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editor

We are submitting a paper *Exploring the intangible costs associated with stillbirth: a structured review and synthesis of the evidence.*

This paper presents a review and qualitative synthesis of the available evidence to try and identify the currently 'intangible costs' that are likely to exist for women and their families who experience still birth. We would be grateful if this paper could be considered for full publication in BMC. This paper has not been published elsewhere nor is it currently under consideration by another journal.

This study is a follow up to an earlier study by Mistry et al. (2013) which was published in BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth [1]. In that study, in which we discussed all possible costs associated with stillbirth, we highlighted that certain costs deemed 'intangible' had not been investigated in the literature. As far as we are aware, the current study is the first to carry out a review and qualitative synthesis in order to explore the costs of still birth that are currently overlooked. In the current paper we find that the psychological effects of stillbirth which adversely impact on the daily functioning, relationships and employment of those affected, have far-reaching economic implications. Research in pursuit of the quantification of the intangible costs of stillbirth is therefore important to accurately estimate the size of the impact on families and health services and to inform policy and decision making.

Systematic reviews of economic studies are accepted within the health economic discipline but they do not typically confirm to PRISMA guidelines. This is because of the heterogeneity of the papers identified, the qualitative
critical appraisal that leads to results, and because meta analyses are not appropriate. Where this has been an issue for papers in other journals they are often referred to as structured reviews and so the current paper now refers to a structured as opposed to a systematic review (as did our last paper). We hope this is acceptable. We have adhered to PRISMA guidelines as far as possible and enclose the checklist. As our study mainly reports on a synthesis of qualitative studies, some of the PRISMA checklist items are not relevant. We have specified in our manuscript that we followed PRISMA guidelines where this was appropriate for this kind of study.

As this study is based on both a structured review and qualitative synthesis – some of tabulated information is presented in tables which are quite large and so these are currently presented in appendix - submitted as additional information. If accepted for publication we would gladly accept advice and guidance from the Editors about whether or not the information should be presented in the main body of the text. I particularly refer to Appendix 4 and 6.

The reported research has been carried out unfunded by the authors who all have an interest, and expertise in pregnancy and childbirth research.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Tracy Roberts
Professor of Health Economics

Reference: