Reviewer’s report

Title: The Specific and Combined role of Domestic Violence And Mental Health Disorders During Pregnancy on New-born Health

Version: 0 Date: 06 Jan 2016

Reviewer: Phyllis Sharps

Reviewer's report:

The paper is well written and addresses an important public health challenge. The examination of domestic violence and mental health disorders and birth outcomes is an important contribution to the science. There is a growing body of published research that examines intimate partner violence, specifically physical and sexual abuse and adverse pregnancy outcomes or poor birth outcomes - which is usually defined as SGA, preterm birth, low birth weight - and while these may be a result of poor placenta perfusion and the compromised fetal nutritional published studies do not make these links and the findings reported in this manuscript do not make a strong case to support that mechanism. It is recommended that the study be reframed to examine associations between domestic violence, mental health and adverse neonatal outcomes or poor birth outcomes.

The domestic violence variable is not well defined or described. The violence reported in this study, is it intimate partner violence, or interpersonal violence of a family member against the pregnant woman. It is not clear who perpetrates the violence, or if the study is examining the association of violence before pregnancy, during pregnancy or violence before and during pregnancy? Also, it not clear how the violence was assessed, what questions were asked or what questionnaires were used to gather this data. More demographic data of comparing the abused women with the non-abused women would also enhance the paper. The discussion of indirect mechanisms and HPA axis and how they may result is poor birth outcomes is a strength of the paper.

Tables 1 and 2 are very hard to interpret. Would suggest reformatting Table 1 to show also women not abused. Table 2 - clarify the abbreviations used in the column headings.

The findings from your studies support the importance of screening for violence against pregnant women especially in the context of smoking and substance abuse. Important role for clinicians and has implications for policy, training of providers for screening and how to make referrals.

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

No
Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

No

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

No

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.

I recommend additional statistical review

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

Acceptable

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