Reviewer’s report

Title: Factors influencing the clinical decision-making of midwives: a qualitative study

Version: 0 Date: 24 Apr 2017

Reviewer: Paul de Reu

Reviewer's report:

Level of interest: an article of outstanding merit and interest in its field.

The authors present an interesting study in which they investigate the complexity of clinical decision-making in midwifery-led care, in this article focused on the obese patient population. They demonstrate that the final decision about the level of care is very complex and does not depend on EBM-guidelines only. The vision and wishes of the patients themselves, the attitudes and experiences of the midwives and local agreements between maternity care professionals play an equal important role in this decision making.

This study is very relevant especially within the Dutch perinatal care system where more than 80% of the pregnant woman attend initially maternity care in an out-of hospital (primary care)midwifery praxis. (this may be mentioned in the article).

It is always a good idea to reveal that differences between midwives (and between obstetricians also) often may lead to improvement of care.

The manuscript reads good and I recommend publication as it stands, with a few minor editorial corrections.

Specific remarks:

Line 76-77: not only the distance to the hospital may play a role in the decision for the proposed place of the delivery, the local infrastructure may often be essential as well (moreover, the decreasing number of hospitals in the Netherlands lead to larger distances and an increasing risk in case of emergency which may be frightening to future parents).

Line 239-241: curious statement: " … as a primary care midwife you are limited with [only] the national midwifery journal …" In my opinion, all medical (and midwifery) journals are available for all midwives if they want to read them.

Line 330-334: The authors mention differing opinions on guidelines between primary (midwives) and secondary (obstetricians) caregivers only. However comparable differences in opinion often occur between midwives as the occur between obstetricians.
The authors conclude in their discussion that decision-making rests on 3 pillars: clinical evidence, expertise of the professional and values of the woman. I think that the possibilities in transport to secondary care facilities (e.g. local infrastructure) is also an essential item that may influence decision-making.

Obstetricians and midwives and also among midwives and among obstetricians play an important role in prescribed pathways …

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

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

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

Yes

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.

Not relevant to this manuscript

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

Acceptable

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