Reviewer’s report

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

Version: 0  Date: 03 May 2017

Reviewer: Emma Paternotte

Reviewer's report:

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

Abstract

The part of EBM should be in line with the background and discussion see further comments.

I should add that this study was performed in the Netherlands.

Adjust the results of the abstract after rewriting the result section.

Background

It is clear what they supposed to do in this research. The background contains the items as Lorelei Lingard, linguist and qualitative researcher, advised (background, what is already known, what is the gap and why is it important). Although, the 'why is it important' could be explained more clearly.

The researchers should think about giving some information about the setting in the background section since the situation in the Netherlands differs a lot compared to obstetrics in other countries. A question which remains in my head after reading the introduction is: What is in it for midwives in Japan, the United States or other countries? How can you make the results and therefore also the background section relevant for many countries?

Methods

The methods follow logically on the research question. It is appreciated that some background of the researches is given.

Again I doubt about the setting of this study 'the Netherlands' and its reproducibility for other countries. It is needed to explain a bit more about the situation of referral from the midwives to the obstetrician and the possibility to be treated by a midwife the whole pregnancy.
The structure of the method section is a bit confusing. Especially the part of data collection, since it contains a lot of information which is not all relevant.

The part about the rigour of the study is clear and meet with the guidelines for qualitative research.

Results

Either explain the data saturation entirely in the method section or in the result section (R173-174).

The quotes are very long and therefore difficult to read. Can they be shortened?

The whole result section is very long and should be shortened to facilitate reading the manuscript.

Discussion

In the discussion a clear overview of the main results is given. The discussion about the protocol is irrelevant and there should be more explanation about the comparison with other countries. For example, is which other country is homebirth a normal way of delivery? And, are there studies outside the Netherlands who describe the decision making process of midwives?

Conclusion

The present conclusion doesn't give a new insights into the influences of clinical decision making. Can you describe what new insight this study brought (research question)?

The last paragraph of the conclusion is focused on further research and not a part of the conclusion.

Detailed comments

Background:

R59: between brackets is barely used in English writing. Can it be removed?

R60-63: Here it is suggested that EBM consist of three factors: the best available clinical evidence, their own clinical expertise, and the situation and values of the pregnant women.
However, EBM is in my opinion only the first factor of these three. A searched for the evidence of this sentence in the cited references, but I could not find it. I would suggest to rewrite this part or to add the correct references.

R65. Decision making process of what? Is this based on research with midwives or other healthcare workers. Please add

R69-71: this is an open door.

R 71-75 and 77-79: You can also say 'for example' and then quote a few instead of trying to be complete.

R81. The definition of EBM should be updated, see comment R60-63

Methods

R120-126: why is this explanation added. It is not necessary for the reader and could be removed.

R141 Can you add a reference for the 'Think aloud method'?

R169 Use the past tense, 'is' should be 'was'.

Figure 1 helps to get insight in the model. Is this an existing model which is used to explain (then this should be added) or is this model made by the researchers of this study (that seems to be strange since you refer in the background section to a reference).

Results

R204-210: this quote is long and is already explained in the text. It doesn't add much.

R215-218: this is focused on the Dutch situation

R268: the heading 'the midwife' doesn't seem to cover the complete theme. Maybe, the midwife as a person or something like that. The term 'physiological birth' does cover this theme more than 'the midwife'.

R49: (Attitude to woman centredness and shared decision-making). I would say that this is an new theme and does not connect directly with 'the midwife'.

R437-442 this doesn't add much since it is not new information.
R420-435 this seems to fit more in the theme 'Collaboration between maternity care professionals'.

R492: why is the care for obese women mentioned? This seems to be a group of pregnant women, but the reason why this group specifically is mentioned and no other groups is unclear, even when I consider the part about obese women in the method section. This theme needs further explanation or could be incorporated into one of the other themes (for example with a quote).

Discussion

R516: Evidence based decision making is something else that evidence based care (background section). Can you use the same terminology in the manuscript except when you want to explain different EBM factors?

Conclusion

R606-607: this sentence doesn't add much and can be removed.

**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
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Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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