Reviewer’s report

Title: Assessing the risk factors before pregnancy of preterm births in Iran: a population-based case-control study

Version: 2 Date: 10 Jan 2018

Reviewer: Ewoud Schuit

Reviewer's report:

1. Consider changing the title to "Assessing pre-pregnancy risk factors of preterm births in Iran: a population-based case-control study"

2. The sample size calculation mentions 14 independent variables, but according to Table 3 there were actually 15 degrees of freedom investigated (or was the listed 14 without maternal age?), so should this be changed?

3. A certain statement in the statistical analysis section (lines 126-130) is not entirely clear to me. The authors state: "The association between independent variables and preterm birth was examined using multivariate logistic regression method adjusted for mother's age, level of education, ethnicity, place of residence, history of abortion, stillbirth and cesarean section, interpregnancy interval, cycles of menstruation period, marriage (consanguineous or nonconsanguineous), and BMI." This suggests that all these variables were incorporated in the multivariable analysis. However, looking at Table 3 some of these variables were included (e.g. maternal age), but others weren't (e.g. BMI). Additionally, the manuscript states that variables were selected based on the univariable analysis (p < 0.3), which makes the list of risk factors even more confusing. My suggestion would be to leave this complete section out the manuscript and continue with "All variables with...".

4. Since this was an etiologic study and not a prognostic study I would be fine with leaving out the Hosmer-Lemeshow test and its result (did the authors mean "p-value" instead of "score"?)

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?
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Yes
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