Reviewer’s report

Title: Antenatal depressive symptoms and early initiation of breastfeeding in association with exclusive breastfeeding 6 weeks postpartum: a longitudinal population-based study

Version: 0 Date: 11 Jan 2018

Reviewer: Heather Sipsma

Reviewer's report:

The authors examine an important aspect of hospital care. The focus on this particular hospital practice provides an important direction for potential intervention that could benefit a substantial proportion of new mothers and significantly affect young families. Overall, I thought the manuscript was well-written but thought that important details and rationales for the methodology were missing. I have listed my comments and concerns below.

1. The authors establish a strong rationale for their study in the background section of the manuscript, including emphasis on the recommended breastfeeding guidelines by the WHO and in Sweden and the importance of breastfeeding for mothers at high risk for depression. I recommend that the middle paragraph, however, focus on early initiation of breastfeeding and not on hospital practices in general. In the last year or so there has been conflicting evidence published on the Baby-Friendly practices in the U.S., and the author may not want to over-generalize, but focus their review of the evidence on early initiation, specifically.

2. In the methodology, it's not clear what the authors mean by "confidential personal data" as an exclusion criterion.

3. The authors should include a percentage for their analytic sample, particularly with respect to missing data. It's hard to figure out what percentage of data was valid (non-missing); if a substantial proportion of the data are missing, a kind of attrition analysis would be warranted.

4. Why did the authors choose 6 weeks postpartum when they (theoretically) had data for up to 6 months in the BASIC study, which aligns with the recommendations of the WHO? It would be helpful if this rationale was included in the manuscript.

5. Univariate analyses involve only one variable (uni-); if the authors are examining associations between factors and breastfeeding (which involve more than one variable), this should be named as "bivariate analyses."
6. Why did the authors choose to focus on 2 hours or less for breastfeeding initiation when the recommendation is that initiation should occur within one hour?

7. How did the authors decide which variables to include in their original/initial multivariable model as main effects? What was the unadjusted or bivariate analysis used for?

8. Did the authors check for multicollinearity among covariates? For instance, is history of depression over-correlated with depressive symptoms during pregnancy? Was depressive symptoms in pregnancy correlated with delayed breastfeeding initiation?

9. The description of the DAG was a bit confusing to me as I felt it lacked important detail in the analysis section. For instance, it's not clear to me what Model 2 shows - how did the authors examine mediation? What was the hypothesis here?

10. There is a typo in (b), line 36 on page 6 - should be after 2 hours, I believe.

11. Why did the authors choose to stratify by delivery mode? This rationale is unclear.

12. What was the retention rate from pregnancy through 6 weeks postpartum? This should be made clearer in the manuscript.

13. A final overall comment might be that although the authors present their findings cautiously, avoiding using casual language, it might be appropriate for them to mention that delayed initiation might be a result of lower or weaker commitment to breastfeeding, which is also reflected in not exclusively breastfeeding at 6 weeks. So the delayed initiation may be a proxy for maternal attitude towards breastfeeding.

14. All references should be properly formatted, particularly the references that are not journal articles.

Thanks for the opportunity to review!
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.

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.

I recommend additional statistical review

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Needs some language corrections before being published

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