Reviewer's report

Title: Cord Pilot Trial, comparing alternative policies for timing of cord clamping before 32 weeks gestation: follow-up for women up to one year

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Reviewer: Zachary A. Vesoulis

Reviewer's report:

In this interesting manuscript by Bradshaw et al. the authors describe a longitudinal follow-up study of breastfeeding and maternal wellbeing after implementation of a randomized delayed cord clamping trial. This manuscript is of interest primarily given the lack of prior research into this area. As the authors rightly point out, a significant amount of research has been conducted on neonatal outcomes with only passing reference to the mothers, and even then focused exclusively on feasibility and safety. In this manuscript the authors focus on the breastfeeding and maternal well being (evaluating for anxiety/depression) with the hypothesis that the early bonding experience of delayed cord clamping leads to a durable effect in both areas. In general the manuscript is interesting and well written, but there are a number of areas where improvements could be made for a more complete evaluation. A list of critiques, organized by manuscript section follows below.

Abstract

-no issues

Introduction

-no issues, concise
Methods

- The authors later note that several of the infants died. Is this not exclusionary, particular when maternal maternal health is one of the measured outcomes?

- What breastfeeding or lactation resources are available in the hospital/out of the hospital?

- Very sparse data is provided about the social determinants of health for the mothers beyond age at parturition. What is the mother's education level? What % are impoverished? What percentage received prenatal care? What about substance abuse during pregnancy, geographic location, race, language, etc?

- "median weeks to stopping breastfeeding" — is this weeks after discharge or weeks after birth?

Results

- The authors should have provided a statistical comparison between the two groups at both time points. While the initial recruitment was randomized and should have resulted in balanced groups, the significant drop out rate appears to have bias the group in some aspect, but the reader is not offered the ability to evaluate.

- Detail should be provided as the the normality of the distributions of the factors

- The authors should either study a separate cohort of control term born infants, use historical controls, or provide normative data from prior studies, both for rates of breast feeding and scores on the questionnaires. The authors are undoubtably correct that the mother's of preterm infants experience more anxiety/depression, but how much more?
Conclusion

- What do the authors speculate is the reason for the INCREASE in percentage of infants receiving mother's milk at discharge?

- It appears that breastfeeding ceased very close to the time of discharge, on average. Why was this the case? This goes back to the earlier question about availability of lactation resources.

- The authors repeatedly describe the different cohorts of women as having various outcomes or factors in "similar proportions" but there is no statistical testing to back up this assertion.

- Important acknowledgment by the authors about the limitation of followup rate.

- It would be interesting to see how the responses vary when stratified by gestational age at birth. Perhaps (likely) that prematurity has a non-linear impact on maternal well being, with substantially greater stress for mothers of infants born < 26 weeks compared to those born at 32 weeks.

- The authors note that the difference in response rate may have been due to "disappointment" with allocated intervention or misunderstanding of randomization. It is not unusual for participants to have some confusion about randomization, but what evidence do the authors have that "disappointment" contributed to response rate?

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.

No

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 am able to assess the statistics

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Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

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