Reviewer’s report

Title: Physiotherapists' and midwives' views of increased inter recti abdominis distance and its management in women after childbirth

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Reviewer: Philip Teg-Nefaah Tabong

Reviewer's report:

Reviewer Report: How do physiotherapists and midwives in primary healthcare perceive the phenomenon of increased inter recti abdominis distance and its management in women after childbirth? A focus group study

General comment

I wish to thank the authors for undertaking this study. The subject area is interesting and potentially useful. However, there is the need for the authors to thoroughly review the manuscript in some areas to improve on flow and scientific soundness. Below are suggestion to improve the article:

1. Title: The title is too long and convoluted. It should be reviewed to "Physiotherapists and midwives views on increased inter recti abdominis distance and management"

There is no need to add the data collection strategy "focus group discussion. The tone in the above suggested topic "views" clearly show it is a qualitative study.

2. Abstract

Methods: The methods should be revised. There is no need to ask research question when writing an abstract. The authors should rather add the sampling strategy.

Result: the first theme identified is vague. The themes should be written as results clearly indicating the findings.

Conclusion: The conclusion has been written as a discussion. The first two sentences are more useful in the results section but not conclusion. The conclusion should be based on perception and management.

3. Keyword: The key words should include perception, management.

4. Main manuscript

* Background
The first sentence here is the exactly the same as introduction in the background. The authors should vary the writing style.

It will be important for the authors to add some statistics about the prevalence and proportion that seek for health care.

* Material and methods

Design: the authors should indicate the qualitative study design. Phenomenology, narrative, grounded theory, case study, historical study, ethnography etc. Although content analysis may suffice as qualitative study design in some instance, the use of "content analysis" in the manuscript is related to "data analysis". The study is not a content analysis. The authors may have adopted content analysis strategy to summarize the data. Focus group discussion is also not a qualitative study design, it is data collection strategy. It is important these distinctions are clearly emphasized in a qualitative study to improve rigour.

* Participants

The participants have been clearly described. My main challenge with this section is the use of focus group discussion when the participants were just sixteen. Individual interviews would have been better. No good justification has been given for the use of FGDs. The authors put them into four in a group when ideally you need at least 6 members to make it a proper FGD.

In the last sentence in this section, the "focus groups" should be changed "prior to the discussion or data collection"

* Procedure for data collection

Well written

5. Data analysis

Well written

6. Results

The themes identified by the author should be revised to make the manuscript clear. For example what does the theme "Ambivalent attitudes towards the phenomenon of increased IRD and its significance as a causal factor for functional problems" mean?

In the opening sentence under this theme the authors draws a rather vague conclusion and presented it as results. The statement "The participants expressed ambivalence in their views" The participant definitely did not expressed ambivalence in their view. This is inference from the authors which should be reserved for discussion.
If there were no consensus on whether IRD should be perceived as a condition that require medical attention, it should be clearly stated. From my reading of the write-up and illustrated quotes, some participants felt IRD does not have psychosocial effects on women whilst others feel otherwise. Views may differ across participants in FGD but a good moderator should be able to probe to arrive at the norm or consensus which become the overarching theme. So the authors report this as the theme and can also indicate the outliers.

* Perceived insufficient professional knowledge base for the management of increased IRD

Well written

* Lack of inter-professional collaboration and teamwork in the management of patients with increased IRD

Well written

7. Discussion

The discussion is balance. I noticed on page 15 starting from line 29, the authors discussed some limitations of the study. It will be important for the authors to introduce a sub-heading "limitations".

8. Conclusion

This is repetition of discussion. The authors should conclude based on the findings. The authors have challenges because of the way the results have been presented. The strategy they adopted makes it difficult to differentiate between results and findings of the study. The suggested findings of the study are participants were unaware and lacked knowledge on IRD and management; perceived IRD are not included in training curriculum and the need for collaboration in the management of IRD. The authors should conclude based on the findings and not repeat results in this section.

**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.

No

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?**
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.
No

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:

Needs some language corrections before being published

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