Reviewer’s report

Title: Parental decision-making following a prenatal diagnosis that is lethal, life-limiting, or has long term implications for the future child and family: a meta-synthesis of qualitative literature

Version: 0 Date: 01 Feb 2019

Reviewer: Lisa Crowe

Reviewer's report:

Dear authors,

I have read your paper with great interest. Unfortunately, I cannot recommend it for publication in its current form.

"Life limiting" - you use this term throughout but make no attempt to define it. This terms will mean very different things to different people, and having a definition as to how you have defined it for the purpose of this paper is important. I would also be interested in how your definition marries up to how the papers you have discussed define life limiting. For example, you have included papers that discuss Down Syndrome, and I know from my own research that this is a condition with conflicting opinions as to whether a TOPFA can even be justified under Clause E, suggesting differing opinions as to whether it is life limiting. I am not saying it is incorrect to use those papers, just to be clear in how you interpret life limiting.

Literature review - you have some quite dated references, for example line 29 you cite a 33 year old reference to make your point here. Off the top of my head, you could have Cited Lotto's papers here (2016, 2017).

Page 5 Line 35 - this statement about identification of several factors appears to contradict your sentence on line 19 where you say little is know about factors influencing parental decision making.

Page 5 - Reference 17 is not included in the bibliography so I am unable to comment on it.

Page 6 Line 1-7. There are studies outside of TOPFA literature that could be alluded to here about healthcare teams supporting parents, (Butterfly Project on multiple loss) as well as papers within the TOPFA literature (again off the top of my head Lotto, 2016, 2017, and possible Fisher various years). Upon having a look at the systematic reviews you cite on line 31, Lou et al., discusses examples of how health professionals can acknowledging them as parents, and acknowledging the child, which I would suggest are examples of how healthcare teams can support parents.
Page 7 line 18 - you state that Lafarge et. al., systematic review is about the experience of TOPFA rather than the decision making process, but they have 2 sections discussing decision making in their paper 'Ambivalence' and 'losing and regaining choice'.

Page 8 - I am not an expert in systematic reviews by any means, but I am wondering if ASSIA should have been included in the database searching.

Page 9 - I think it is reasonable to state which author did what regarding coding.

Page 9 - I would be interested in how you have defined low quality and explained the exclusions for methodological bias more.

Themes: You have lots of sub themes. To me, the discussion feels a bit fragmented and doesn't flow. I am not sure why you haven't focused on less sub themes in more depth. Your subthemes are also unbalanced - Theme 1 you have 5, theme 2 you have 2 theme 3 you have 3. you have also referenced an excluded study in your results (reference 31 - page 9 line 23 you say it is excluded, page 10 line 59 you reference it).

Themes: You have put a couple of quotes in that seem a bit random as there is not explanation before or after them (for example, page 14 line 54, and page 16 line 51).

Page 17 line 38-44 - this feels like a bit of a repeat of an earlier point. If it is to stand alone separate, it needs some more unpicking.

Page 18 line 31 - I am not convinced you have produced a novel finding. For example "Another pregnancy is generally soothing but can be bitter-sweet, another illustration of ambivalence. A new pregnancy is seen as a leap of faith requiring courage and determination, but which is eventually rewarding: "no guts, no glory" " - This is a direct quote from Lafarge et al., who you reference. I may be incorrect as I have not had time within the time frame of completing this reference to go back to some of the literature and check, but I am not convinced this is novel.

My knowledge of psychological theory is limited, however, I would have expected any theoretical discussion to come much earlier in the paper, with the discussion used to demonstrate how the findings support the theoretical argument presented earlier.

Page 20 - line 18 - I am not convinced you have included all papers anyway, but I will again concede I may be incorrect as I have not had the opportunity in the time frame to consult the literature to check my thoughts.

Page 21 line 1-10. ""All staff involved in the care of a woman or couple facing a possible termination of pregnancy must adopt a non-directive, non-judgemental and supportive approach" This is a direct quote from the Royal College of Obstetric and Gynaecology guidelines for professionals supporting parents undergoing TOPFA. So while I agree with what
you say in that care teams should be aware of parents' beliefs etc, again, this is not a new conclusion and something already stated in professional guidelines.

References: Some more up to date references needed. Nothing against older references, but if you want to cite them, I would include an up to date one wherever possible to show the continued relevance of this discussion.

I would have expected to see some references in your paper - the Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology for example, FASP guidelines, as well as some authors (Robyn Lotto 2016, 2017 in particular I would have expected to see - one of her papers discussed parents, the other is professionals). References 64> don't appear to have been cited in the paper?

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Unable to assess

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Unable to assess

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

Declaration of competing interests
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?
2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?

If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

I declare that I have no competing interests

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal