Reviewer's report

Title: Haemoglobin level at birth influences short term outcomes and mortality in preterm infants

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Reviewer: Therese Dowswell

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Haemoglobin level at birth influences short term outcomes and mortality in preterm infants
Banerjee J et al

Thanks for sending me this interesting paper to review.

1. Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined?
The question posed by the authors is important as it may contribute to the evidence re the timing of cord clamping in preterm deliveries. It is known that gestational age and infant birthweight are associated with neonatal outcomes, the authors look at whether low Hb at birth is associated with adverse outcomes when data are adjusted for GA and LBW. The background literature review is appropriate.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replicate the work?
I would have liked some more information on methods. The authors did not state why they focused on births up to 32 weeks. Was there a study protocol? The choice of outcomes appears appropriate, although the process outcomes are difficult to interpret – did the length of stay in neonatal facilities remain constant over the study period (6 years). The choice of cut-offs for the categorisation of the Hb levels were not justified in the methods section – were these cut-offs decided before data collection? (Minor essential revisions)

3. Are the data sound and well controlled?
The data appear sound and the analysis appropriate. I couldn't follow table 3. I assumed that the haemoglobin categories applied to both the top and the bottom halves of the table, and that the surviving infants were a subset of the whole sample. I could not understand how, if there were 122 infants in the 16–<18 Hb category, the number of infants that survived was greater than the total number in that category. It would also seem surprising if only about half of the infants in the 14-16 category survived? Is there a (serious) mistake in this table, or have I misunderstood? The table either needs clearer labels or correction. (Minor essential revision)

4. Do the figures appear to be genuine, i.e. without evidence of manipulation?
Yes, apart from comment above re table 3, the data in the figures and tables appears logical.

5. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
Yes, minor comments above.

6. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
Yes, although there was only very limited discussion of why haemoglobin levels affected survival.

7. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
Yes.

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare I have no competing interests