**Reviewer’s report**

**Title:** Deferred and referred deliveries contribute to stillbirths in the Indian state of Bihar: results from a population-based survey of all births

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 20 Nov 2018

**Reviewer:** Jason Gardosi

**Reviewer's report:**

This is a comprehensive study of stillbirths in Bihar, benefitting from data collection which included cases as well as all births as denominator. It is overall well written and delivers some important messages about maternal and pregnancy related risk factors, as well as place of birth and related aspects of maternity care. I have some suggestions which hopefully will help bring these messages out more clearly.

Firstly, in regarding definitions:

1. Deferred and Referred need to be defined in abstract, as results are given there using these terms

2. I also cannot see an explanation of 'Deferred' in the Methods section

There is a lot of data presented and while the paper is already long, some of the findings would merit further comment:

3. The lack of routine collection of weight of the stillborn is itself an important finding, as well as a clear weakness of the study, in light of the well published evidence that fetal growth restriction is one of the strongest risk factors. This will remain so unless there is an effort to improve collection of such data. Perhaps this could be emphasised more, and if possible also brought into the abstract.

4. Discussion, p 14 - re decreased fetal movement: it would be worth adding that in such a survey, the presence of 'decreased' movement could have been = absent fetal movement, already indicating fetal demise.

5. Page 16, line 31: 'Furthermore, antepartum stillbirth was significantly higher in vaginal deliveries' - is this not surprising? Would merit comment.
6. Why do the authors think private sector deliveries have a higher rate of SB?

It would also be worth commenting on some of the negative findings, e.g.

7. Why was 'No antenatal visit' NOT associated with SB risk? (Table 3)

8. Why do the authors think primips have a higher rate of ANTEpartum stillbirth? (Table 3)

Elaboration on some of these points will make the findings more relevant to all readers, including clinicians, epidemiologists and health service planners.

**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.

Yes

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