Author’s response to reviews

Title: Pregnancy-specific malarial immunity and risk of malaria in pregnancy and adverse birth outcomes: a systematic review

Authors:

Julia Cutts (julia.cutts@burnet.edu.au)
Paul Agius (paul.agius@burnet.edu.au)
Zaw Lin (zlin@who.int)
Rosanna Powell (rosannapowell@gmail.com)
Kerryn Moore (kerryn.moore@mcri.edu.au)
Bridget Draper (bridget.draper@burnet.edu.au)
Julie Simpson (julieas@unimelb.edu.au)
Freya Fowkes (freya.fowkes@burnet.edu.au)

Version: 2 Date: 06 Nov 2019

Author’s response to reviews:

Dear Dr Samuel,

We would like to submit our revised manuscript entitled “Pregnancy-specific malarial immunity and risk of malaria in pregnancy and adverse birth outcomes: a systematic review” for consideration for publication in BMC Medicine. We have carried out the revisions suggested by Reviewer 2 and provide a point-by-point response below.

Kind regards,

Julia Cutts
Reviewer #2: Diane Taylor

The authors have made significant changes in the manuscript and it is now easier to follow the overall flow of the analysis. Deleting/moving the sections on anemia (multiple causes), severe malaria (no standard definition) and premature delivery (multiple causes, inaccurate timing) helps focus the goals of the analysis and provides clarity. Adding summary sentences really helped me understand how to interpret what I had just read. I would have loved to see the last sentence in the first paragraph of the Discussion in the Abstract, as the conclusions in the Abstract (i.e., we need more studies) seems weak.

We appreciate the reviewer’s suggestion and have added the last sentence in the first paragraph of the discussion to the end of the abstract (line 57). As the addition of this sentence exceeds the word limit for the abstract, and makes the conclusions section relatively long, we have re-arranged the abstract slightly, and reduced the word count.

Two minor points:

1. Rapid Diagnostic Tests (RDTs): RDTs are not mentioned in the section on diagnose of malaria. Did any of the studies included in the study use RDT? I assume that if RDTs were used, the authors also used histology or blood smears. But it is possible that some of the studies use RDT without additional parasitological support. Some mention of RDTs seems relevant.

None of the studies included in the review used RDT as the method of diagnosis of falciparum malaria infection. We have added the following sentence to the Quality criteria section of the Methods (lines 190-191):

“Studies that used rapid diagnostic tests as the sole method of diagnosis for P. falciparum infection were excluded.”

2. Both Lloyd et al. (2018) and Siriwardhana et al. (2017) used samples from 1377 pregnant women. (I hate numbers as they are impossible to proofread. Sorry for the confusion).

Thank you for the clarification, we have now corrected the sample size to 1377 for Siriwardhana et al in Table 2.