Reviewer’s report

Title: The impact of a computerized decision aids on vaginal versus cesarean section delivery - Study protocol for a randomized controlled trial

Version: 3
Date: 18 February 2015

Reviewer: Dell Horey

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1. Will the study design adequately test the hypothesis?

The stated hypothesis for this study is “that the decision aid decreases decisional conflict and increases patient knowledge about cesarean and vaginal delivery modes”. The study design is adequate to test the stated hypothesis, however there are underlying problems with at least one of the two implied assumptions that appear to inform this hypothesis. These assumptions are not explicitly stated and it has been necessary for me, as a reader, to presume them. It would be much preferable for the study authors to be explicit about any assumptions that they have made. This will reduce misunderstandings and help with interpretation of the study findings. I consider this to be an essential revision.

The first assumption appears to be that inappropriate decisions about care, in this case requesting caesarean delivery when it is not warranted, results from poor knowledge. The authors have now provided evidence of high rates of caesarean delivery in Iran and the potential contribution that maternal request makes to this situation. This information highlights the relevance of undertaking this study. The authors have also included references to support the contention that pregnant Iranian women may have inadequate knowledge to make informed decisions about their care. Unfortunately I am unable to access these papers.

The second assumption is less clear and relates to decisional conflict. The primary thrust of the hypothesis is that decisional conflict will decrease with use of a decision aid. It is unclear what connection the study authors see between decisional conflict, knowledge and health decisions. The authors have provided no information about the level of decisional conflict in the proposed study population, although it appears that they believe it to be high as they propose that introducing a decision aid will decrease decisional conflict by 15 percent. In the absence of supporting evidence the authors should make their assumptions about the level of decisional conflict and its relationship with knowledge and decisions about care explicit. The authors also need to consider that people can have low levels of decisional conflict and make poor health decisions. It is possible that a decision aid may increase women’s knowledge about different delivery modes and increase decisional conflict. More knowledge about care options could make the women in the study less certain that they have made the right decision. Increasing decisional conflict may be a necessary step for longer-term behaviour change in a population that is convinced that caesarean
delivery is the best option.

2. Are sufficient details provided to allow replication of the work or comparison with related analyses: if not, what is missing?

There is insufficient information to replicate the study. Specifically the management of the randomisation procedure including allocation of women to either the intervention or control group is not described. I consider inclusion of this detail to be an essential revision.

3. Is the planned statistical analysis appropriate?

The planned analyses appear to be appropriate.

4. Do the figures appear to be genuine, i.e. without evidence of manipulation?

There is no indication that the figures provided are not genuine.

5. Is the writing acceptable?

The authors would benefit from the assistance of an English editor. There are problems with grammar, particularly with use of appropriate tense. For example, this is a study protocol but the abstract says “The study is a randomized trial that is performed among Iranian women.” The text swaps between future and past tense throughout. There are also other problems with English expression, for example the third paragraph in the Discussion starts as follows “The based our study on the premise of the decision theory”. Copy-editing is an essential revision.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.