Reviewer's report

Title: Psychological issues and construction of the mother-child relationship in women with cancer during pregnancy: a perspective on current and future directions

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Reviewer: Susan Carroll

Reviewer's report:

General review:

This is a very well written paper which presents a strong argument for developing a research agenda to inform the provision of multidisciplinary care to women who experience cancer during pregnancy. The authors provide a good understanding of the challenges faced by this group of women and a clear rationale for developing a better understanding of psychosocial factors that contribute to the mother's functioning and the mother-child attachment. It would be useful for future research to address the areas highlighted by the authors, and develop an integrative model of care.

Specific comments:

Lines 97-100 Moreover, some parents-to-be are not embedded in a supportive social network and an integrative, multidisciplinary team can provide emotional and practical support to the couple in enduring treatment and sustaining their role and responsibility as a parent [15].

I would separate this into two sentences so it reads more clearly. At the moment, it sounds like parents-to-be are not embedded in a supportive network and an integrative, multidisciplinary team. I'd end the first sentence after "social network".

Lines 110-112: Therefore one of the main developmental steps during pregnancy is the formation of the prenatal attachment; if this is not achieved, there is a higher risk of developing only a partial attachment to the future child [16, 19].

Here, it is unclear what is meant by "partial attachment". I would ask the authors to provide clearer evidence of how pre-natal attachment is related to post-natal attachment, and to elaborate on what is meant by "partial attachment" as this is not a widely used term in the attachment literature.
Lines 127-129: Socio-emotional issues which have been identified in non-expecting patients should be addressed also in mothers-to-be, although these issues could be less present as pregnancy might be a form of resilience in itself.

It would be beneficial for the authors to expand and be more specific about which "socio-emotional" issues should be addressed in mothers to be. It would also be useful to provide a clearer explanation and evidence to support the statement "pregnancy is a form of resilience in itself".

139-142: There is still little knowledge about cancer during pregnancy, even more so with regards to the psychological impact of the diagnosis on the mother's functioning and of the long-lasting effects that this stressful life event might have on the formation of the mother-child attachment bond and on their wellbeing.

I would just change "even more so" to "even less so".

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?
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Unable to assess

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
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Yes

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