

Reviewer's report

Title: Concepts on Quality of Antenatal Care in Developing Countries: Results of an Evaluation in Argentina, Cuba, Saudi Arabia and Thailand.

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Reviewer: Dr A Handler

Level of interest: A paper whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Advice on publication: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the compulsory revisions

The authors of this paper, Concepts on Quality of Antenatal Care in Developing Countries: Results of an Evaluation in Argentina, Cuba, Saudi Arabia and Thailand report on the results of focus groups concerning women's perceptions about pregnancy and health care, their experience with health services and health providers and their opinions about a new antenatal care program in which the number of visits to the doctor is reduced. While the authors are reporting on topics of importance to prenatal care providers and policy-makers, the paper is too long, meandering and difficult to follow for the reader to fully understand the points the authors are trying to convey. The following are recommended as compulsory revisions:

- 1) Please present the current visit protocol in each country and the reduced visit protocol in each country.
- 2) The theoretical framework should be substantially reduced to include a few cogently presented arguments that relate to the analysis at hand.
- 3) "Women of different ages, parities and social conditions were included in each discussion (Table 1)." This information is not actually provided in Table 1. Table 1 only includes the total number of women participating in each country, their average age, and their mean number of children.
- 4) Information must be provided on exactly how many focus groups were conducted in each country and the number of women completing the traditional versus modified antenatal care protocol in each

focus group

5) The authors should discuss how the varying class backgrounds of the women from the four countries are confounded with the country/cultural differences.

6) The authors should eliminate the elaborate descriptions of the results from each country. Instead, they should use tables 2-4 (which are never actually referred to in the current text) to frame their presentation of results, demonstrating similarities and differences across the countries. The paper is much more interesting when the cross-national comparisons are made and a presentation of the results in the tables is the natural way to do this.

7) Many of the comments in the section "Opinions about the ANC programme" do not appear to be about the new protocol but about prenatal care in general. This section should be tightened with a clearer focus on the new protocol.

8) The discussion section does not refer back to any peer reviewed literature about women's perceptions and experiences with prenatal care. A connection to the peer reviewed literature is critical.

9) The authors must mention a major limitation of the study, its limited external validity.

Competing interests:

None declared.