

## Reviewer's report

**Title:** Brazilian Obstetrician-Gynecologists and Abortion: A Survey of Knowledge, Opinions and Practices

**Version:** 1 **Date:** 12 June 2005

**Reviewer:** Jos Guilherme Cecatti

### Reviewer's report:

#### General

This is a very interesting article on the Brazilian Ob&Gyn's opinion regarding abortion, its knowledge and practices. It is a well conducted survey and also a well written article. This is an update topic that, although focusing in the Brazilian situation, could broadly be used for all settings where there are several restrictions to abortion, as is the case of the most Latin American countries.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

- In the Abstract, the variables studied should be stated in the methods session. The results session should include the information on to how many professionals the questionnaire was sent and how many answered it.

- Background, page 4, last paragraph: the authors state that "No published study has surveyed a nationally representative sample of Brazilian obstetricians-gynecologists (OB-GYNs) about abortion". This is not true. There is a bigger survey performed in 2003, also using a mailed questionnaire and sent to all Ob-Gyn registered in FEBRASGO, with 4.261 valid respondents (at least four times higher than the current sample). At the best of my knowledge, there are two articles already published focusing these data: Faundes A et al. Rev Bras Ginecol Obstet 2004; 26(2): 89-96 and Faundes A et al. Reproductive Health Matters 2004; 12(Suppl.1): 47-56. I believe that is necessary to include this information and, as well, to compare the current results with those from these articles in the discussion session.

- Methods session, page 6: I think it should be included the information on how many professionals were registered in the FEBRASGO at the moment of the survey, and how was the random sample obtained. Was the proportion of professionals in regions or states taken into account the sampling procedure? This would be important considering some arguments are used regarding the region the professionals come from.

- Methods session, page 6-7: Was the questionnaire anonymous? Was it pre tested? Was the research proposal previously approved by a local Institutional Review Board?

- Methods session, page 7, last paragraph, line 6: according to my understanding of the article, the p-value should be equal or below 0.1 and not 0.01. Is that right?

- Results session, page 8, 2nd paragraph, lines 5-7: there is an informational problem here. The Brazilian law in fact does not fixe a maximum limit of gestational age for legal abortion. Who does

that is the MOH in its guidelines.

- Results session, page 9, 3rd paragraph focusing results from Table 5: It should be highlighted that almost 70% of professionals have never received training on abortion procedures at all. This would be important for the final arguments the authors use in the discussion.

- Results session, page 9, 3rd paragraph, line 5: the text report a percentage for D&C of 95%, but in Table 5 a 59.6% is reported. What is the real figure?

- Results session, page 10, paragraph focusing the results of multivariate analysis: I think that the results finding "to be Catholic" as a factor associated with a more liberal opinion should carefully be considered. It could lead to the misinterpretation that Catholicism is really a positive influence on liberal position of the professionals, and I think that it is not really the case. The special situation of religion in Brazil should be taken into account (official versus real religion, mixed religions, etc, etc.). This should also be taken into account for comments in the discussion session, like the one in page 13, end of the second paragraph ("Unexpectedly, Catholic physicians were among...").

- Results session, page 10, paragraph focusing the results of multivariate analysis: a consideration should be made on the use of the variable "in favor of public funding for legal abortion services", considering the reference (No) is based in a very few number of cases (only 24!).

- Tables: all tables report a 572 total number of respondents. However, for several variables reported, the total number are different! The missed information should be provided.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

- Background, 1st paragraph, lines 4-5: instead "severe fetal malformation", "fetal malformation incompatible with neonatal life" should better describe the real situation often approved for abortion in Brazil.

- Background, 1st paragraph, line 12: maternal mortality "ratio", other than "rate".

- Results session, 1st paragraph: I would recommend to include the word "states" in the end of the paragraph.

- Table 6. It is a very large table. I understand that it means a first step for the next multivariate analysis. However, I think that it would look much better if some changes were performed. The first would be to interchange the position of both columns, being that for "more liberal" the first. The second radical suggestion is, instead of reporting Chi square and p-value, to report prevalence ratios and their 95%CI. For the variable Regions, for instance, some additional comments could also be drawn from this approach.

**What next?:** Accept after minor essential revisions

**Level of interest:** An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**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