

Reviewer's report

Title: Water aerobics versus no exercise in pregnancy: cardiovascular response, labor and neonatal outcomes from a randomized controlled trial

Version: 1 **Date:** 16 September 2008

Reviewer: A Lucia

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting study (overall well done) that deals with a topic of clinical relevance. The study is compelling.

I have however numerous major and minor recommendations to make that I will just mention in chronological order. I think they are constructive and really necessary.

1. Title. Please find a more attractive, shorter one.
2. Background. Please make sure that literature is totally updated, especially position stands from reference institutions. Also, a very important recent reference is missing: Barakat et al. Br J Sports Med. Freely available in the journal web (editor's free choice). Please specify in your paper what your study adds compared to the one by Barakat.
3. Background, 3rd paragraph. Please specify contraindications (at least briefly).
4. Same for next paragraph (what is exactly meant by 'moderate intensity'?)
5. Next paragraph: bad choice of references (e.g., # 4 is a review and actually the only randomized controlled trials looking at the effects of exercise training during pregnancy and allowing to establish a cause-effect relationship between exercise training and pregnancy outcomes are the one by Barakat and the present one).
6. Methods A flowchart of subject inclusion and exclusion criteria, drop-outs etc is absolutely necessary (following CONSORT guidelines (please see the website for the CONSORT statement and use the flowchart that is freely available in the web))
7. 'Practice of water aerobics'. Again, please be more specific: what HR values are we talking of?
8. How did you estimate cardiac output?
9. The two 1st paragraphs of the Results section should move to the Methods section.
10. The results section is too long and verbose (hard to read) and there is duplication with tables and Figures. Please be more concise
11. Figures: please remove hard values from the Figures (otherwise you are

really going against the 'philosophy' of using Figures instead of tables).

12. End of results. Apgar scores aren't so high in the 1st min. Any explanation?

13. Discussion should be much more concise and 'to the point'. The 1st paragraph should summarise the main findings and novelties of the study. There are too many short paragraphs. There is too much speculation, e.g., the authors haven't measured peripheral vascular resistance such as to really 'confirm' anything.

14. The 1st sentence of the Conclusion paragraph nicely summarises your findings which are of relevance per se. Please try to rewrite the manuscript (particularly Discussion) emphasising its main findings and without trying to discuss every single finding. If it is necessary to fulfil this purpose, just remove some variables from the study.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field