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Title	The Canadian Preterm Birth Network: a study protocol for improving outcomes for preterm infants and their families
Authors	Prakesh S. Shah MD MSc, Sarah D. McDonald MD MSc, Jon Barrett MD, Anne Synnes MDCM MHSc, Kate Robson, Jonathan Foster, Jean-Charles Pasquier MD PhD, K.S. Joseph MD PhD, Bruno Piedboeuf MD, Thierry Lacaze-Masmonteil MD PhD, Karel O'Brien MD, Sandesh Shivananda, MD MSc, Nils Chaillet, PhD, Petros Pechlivanoglou PhD, on behalf of the Canadian Preterm Birth Network Investigators*
Reviewer 1	Dr. Peter Fowlie
Institution	Ninewells Hospital and Medical School, Paediatrics, Dundee, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
General comments (author response in bold)	<p>Thanks for letting me review this paper. I have to admit finding it hard to read such papers critically as they are not reports of research undertaken and neither are they grant applications but something sort of in between. Similarly, I am not sure who the paper is aimed at. Is it to disseminate this vision to Canadian clinicians and researchers so they might "buy into it" in due course?</p> <p><b>-Thank you for the comment. As mentioned in our reply to the Editors' comment #1, we have added the statement "We also provide the readers with the framework for a flagship national research program designed to address gaps in perinatal-neonatal research and improve Canadian neonatal and family outcomes over the next five years" to the introduction. We hope this clears up our intentions in publishing this protocol and identifies our intended audience.</b></p> <p>The paper clearly describe a network of units, researchers/clinicians and databases that will be undertaking a programme of work over the next 4 or 5 years with the overall aim of improving neonatal care and outcomes across Canada. This is a bold vision which is to be applauded.</p> <p><b>-Thank you, we appreciate the support.</b></p> <p><b>Within the three clusters described the various programmes of work seem appropriate and are described in enough detail to let the reader grasp what is intended.</b></p> <p>1. Indeed I wonder if it is necessary to go into as much detail about the various power calculation and analyses in this paper compared to for example a formal grant application or final report on findings. [Ed note: we appreciate this level of detail]</p> <p><b>-Thank you for the comment. We have maintained the details you have mentioned per the Editors' request.</b></p> <p>2. Again, I am not sure how much detail is needed and to some extent it depends on the purpose of the paper and who it is aimed at but there is little describing the proposed costs, staffing and infrastructure that would be required to establish such a network other than the main office would be in Toronto.</p> <p><b>-Thank you for the comment. We have included information about the funding in the introduction and the network governance in the study design section of the methods in addition to an added appendix to address this concern. The network is funded by CIHR to cover costs associated with establishment of network.</b></p> <p>3. Similarly a significant part of the proposed work seems to involve data linkage of routinely collected data held in a number of different established databases across Canada. If so, how much detail about this aspect of the programme is needed?</p> <p><b>-Thank you for the comment. We have left the information regarding the provincial databases in place because many of the PTB Network projects require provincial data for their analysis. The provincial networks provide health services utilization data and information on the social determinants of health that are not currently collected by the Canadian Neonatal Network. Furthermore, provincial data is not currently available as a pooled data set. The integration of provincial databases within this grant's infrastructure is a large undertaking and important to the execution of PTB Network Projects, particularly in Cluster 3; therefore, we believe it is an important detail to highlight in this protocol.</b></p> <p>The overall vision of the network being proposed is clear and exciting and obviously of merit. The proposed programme of work is relevant. I am not sure if some of the description is too detailed [precise statistical calculations/proposed analyses] while in other places it lacks detail [costs/infrastructure, data management plans]. I think depending on the journal editors, this proposal/protocol might well be of some general interest but in a more focused narrative paper that does not necessarily need to be structured formally into Introduction - Methodology - Ethics - Analyses - Interpretation. My recommendation - Major revision - simply reflects my uncertainty as to how this</p>

	<p>type of manuscript is viewed by the journal and the editors rather than there being anything inherently "wrong" with the content.</p> <p><b>-Thank you for your thoughtful comments.</b></p>
<b>Reviewer 2</b>	Miss Emily Bartsch
Institution	Department of Medicine, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ont.
General comments (author response in bold)	<p>This manuscript clearly outlines the study protocol for the development of an impressive interdisciplinary Canada-wide preterm birth network. The PTB Network will bring together existing research groups and expand their scope to include pregnancy and pre-pregnancy events, as well as linkages to provincial databases, which house important information on health care utilization and social determinants of health. The network will include QI initiatives, evaluation of current practices for PTB, economic analyses, and consideration of parental experiences.</p> <p>This is a very thoughtful protocol and I have only a couple of comments:</p> <p><b>-Thank you for your positive comments.</b></p> <p>1. There are specific anticipated projects described for Clusters 2 and 3, but not for Cluster 1. In the section on Cluster 1/QI projects, it would be helpful to describe some potential QI projects that the PTB Network might undertake and/or review QI projects and their findings that have been done previously regarding PTB outcomes.</p> <p><b>-Thank you for the comment. We have highlighted the two primary research projects in Cluster 1 similar to the format in Cluster 2 and Cluster 3 as suggested.</b></p> <p>3. Cluster 3 is seemingly focused on economic analyses surrounding preterm birth, and #6 - Evaluation of parental experiences - does not fit well into this category. It may be better suited as its own unique cluster.</p> <p><b>-Thank you for the comment. We agree that it would fit better in a separate cluster; however, the funded network grant was structured this way for simplicity and the essence is that these projects will be tackled under overall umbrella of the PTB Network project so we have not made any changes.</b></p>