Reviewer's report

Title: A Tutorial on Pilot Studies: The What, Why and How

Version: 2 Date: 9 September 2009

Reviewer: Edwin van Teijlingen

Reviewer's report:

Please number your comments and divide them into

1. An interesting and worthwhile paper. I have a few relatively minor comments and observations.

2. Although the authors refer to pilot studies in general reading the paper makes it clear that they really mean quantitative pilot studies. Not conducting three face-to-face pilot interviews before embarking on a full-scale qualitative study of 34 interviews. Perhaps this should be acknowledge somewhere, or at least reflected upon.

3. Page 4: The last sentence of the paragraph finishing at the top of the page can be shortened as the reference 5 to 8 are not necessary and don’t add to the paper. I suggest stop the sentence after “.. conducting a larger scale study.” AND remove the four references altogether.

4. Under section 2 Van Teijlingen is misspelt twice, it is also wrong in reference 11.

5. Page 3: Explain to audience, who might not be epidemiologists, clinical researchers or quantitative researchers what a phase I, II and III study is.

6. On page 6 the authors begin their section 4 with the sentence “The biggest challenge with pilot studies is that many of them never get published…” In the first paragraph is not a single reference, which is a missed opportunity, especially since the publication by van Teijlingen & Hundley (2001) which is your reference 11 has a section called: ‘Why are pilot studies not reported?’

7. Grammar: The authors use et al a few times this should be et al. (as al. is an abbreviation).

- Minor Essential Revisions

None

What next?

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- Accept after minor essential revisions (which the authors can be trusted to
make)

Level of interest
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Interest to general research community
Quality of written English
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- Acceptable

Statistical review
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Is it essential that this manuscript be seen by an expert statistician? NO
- No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests
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'I declare that I have no competing interests'