Reviewer's report

Title: Balancing high accrual and ethical recruitment in paediatric oncology: a qualitative study of the 'look and feel' of clinical trial discussions

Version: 1 Date: 13 August 2010

Reviewer: Helen Sammons

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for asking me to review this interesting article. It contains only a limited number of parents but does add to our knowledge on the subject of recruitment. The aim was to investigate how recruitment was conducted and the clinicians role and the parents experience. The writing was clear and the title and abstract reflected the work. The methodology was clearly described and appropriate. The quotes were appropriately presented and aided the article. It was a shame that only 5 consultations included specific discussion of randomisation so limiting the results on this specific issue.

Major compulsory revisions

The aim was to compare how trial discussions looked to an observer and how they felt to parents. It would be nice if the researchers were able to link parental misunderstandings e.g. about randomisation or personalised treatment back to the consultation, if possible, and comment how this could be changed/improved.

Discretionary revisions

1) The methods were well described but I would have liked a little more detail on the structure of the parental interview. Did this involve any set questions or structure?

2) As not all interviews contained references to the trial, I presume this project was not the overall aim of the RAPPORT interview. It would be nice to know the aims of the whole project.

3) Do the researchers have any suggestions for good practice for how randomisation could be described from their observations?

4) How could we assess or prevent the subtle misunderstandings? (Having heard the consultations?)

5) Did all doctors declare their dual roles? It says in discussion that they did this in a subtle way. It would have been interesting to probe this further with parents. Do you have any recommendations on how doctors should present this dual role from your project?

Level of interest: An article of importance 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:
No competing interests