Reviewer's report

Title: Factors influencing recruitment to research: qualitative study of the experiences and perceptions of research teams

Version: 1 Date: 19 October 2013

Reviewer: Galen Joseph

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The introduction is rather short and the literature review brief and focused on RCTs while the study itself focuses on a broader range of research.

2. One item that is missing from the article is a clear statement of the contribution to the field. A more focused and in-depth literature review could help to situate the contribution of research presented here. As it stands, the contribution of this reported research is not clear to this reader.

3. The participants in the study represent only 3 research teams, but a very broad range of types of studies (“clinically focused studies.”) While this could be an advantage, it also presents some disadvantages in that the results seem too vague and broad to be useful. Most of the issues raised are not new in the literature, but none are covered in depth here. A couple of interesting points that could be explored more fully, and that are not yet fully addressed in the literature, include the concept of “the art of recruitment”. Is that a term used by the authors or the participants in the study? Can this be explored/explained more fully?

Also, the section on Participant characteristics is very brief however, the point about limited English speakers is interesting and important--in the UK, as well as the US and elsewhere. Do you have more data on this topic?

4. In the discussion section in the discussion of recruiter characteristics, there is no mention of the issue of relationship between potential study participants and the recruiter. This is an issue, especially for the recruitment of participants across language, culture and literacy levels. Is this why your study participants thought doctors were more successful recruiting their own patients?

5. The Discussion section paragraph on research scientists inability to recruit for their own study could more robustly address the advantages and disadvantages, and also explain the rationale behind the prohibition.

6. Among the limitations, you might discuss the fact that the methods used only access what researchers say about their own recruitment experiences but do not include observations of actual practices of recruitment.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. A couple of typos in the first paragraph of the Discussion section: though
should be through; participant should be plural in the 4th to last line.

Discretionary Revisions
1. in Table 2 the term Registrar is used. This term may need clarification for an international audience.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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.