Reviewer’s report

Title: Online focus groups as a tool to collect data in hard-to-include populations: Examples from paediatric oncology

Version: 2 Date: 21 February 2009

Reviewer: Margaret Holmes-Rovner

Reviewer’s report:

Major Compulsory Revisions: None

The authors have been very responsive to the prior review. The report is now a well-focused methodological report of their highly innovative and important study. They are to be commended for careful attention to human subjects protection concerns and have reported their methods in detail. This should be instructive to other researchers who adopt this method. In addition, their decision to report response rates is very important for several reasons. One is to judge the representativeness, as they indicate. The other is to reveal the level of eagerness or reluctance of volunteers to participate. Dropout rates is just as important in understanding this new method.

Minor Essential Revisions: none

Discretionary Revisions:

One comment that occurs to this reviewer is for the discussion. Since a number of the respondents indicated that they would like to meet their online peers, it would be respectful and responsive to offer them an opportunity to meet. This act of appreciation could be a simple offer to hold an optional gathering at the clinical site for refreshments and conversation. That way no one would be pressured, but those who might like further contact and conversation could meet.

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:

I declare that I have no competing interests.