Reviewer’s report

Title: Exploration of the beliefs and experiences of Aboriginal people with cancer in Western Australia: A methodology to acknowledge cultural difference and build understanding

Version: 1 Date: 27 May 2009

Reviewer: Gertraud Maskarinec

Reviewer’s report:

The goal of this manuscript is to describe the methodology used for a research project in Western Australia that involves Aboriginal people and aims to understand their beliefs about cancer. The approach is very appropriate; it is based on interviews and applies qualitative methods. The paper is very well written. It provides an excellent rationale for this type of research among Indigenous people, presents important background information on the history of Aboriginal people, and describes the methods of the interviews in good detail. Given the health status of this population, this type of research is of great importance and needs to be disseminated.

However, there are two major concerns with the manuscript. One is that many parts of the manuscript are very general and would benefit from some information pertinent to this particular cancer-related project and from a few hints at the findings. The second problem is that the lessons learnt from this project could be related to research in other Indigenous populations, e.g., Native Americans, who face similar health problems and cultural issues. This would make the paper more interesting to investigators outside of Australia.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. In the abstract, the final section should summarize what was learnt during the planning and interview phases of this project rather than repeating the more general considerations that apply to all research among Indigenous populations.

2. On pages 3 and 4, it would be good to add the commonly diagnosed cancers, the most important risk factors, and the major challenges among Aboriginal people to illustrate the importance of this research.

3. The introduction of the researchers to Indigenous research methodology (pages 4-6) could be shortened substantially because this information has been published elsewhere. Also, this section would benefit from a view toward cultures other than Aboriginal people in Australia.

4. The section on Axiology may be better placed before the description of the research methodology. A comparison to human subjects principles applied around the world, i.e., Respect, Beneficence, and Justice, and within other Indigenous populations would emphasize the unique points about Aboriginal
people and make this applicable to other parts of the world.

5. As discussed above, the discussion should summarize the experiences gained during this research process rather than repeat general principles. It would also be interesting to read more how the Aboriginal community will benefit from this research project.

Minor Essential Revisions None
Discretionary Revisions None

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**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.
Gertraud Maskarinec