Reviewer's report

Title: Understanding childhood asthma in focus groups: perspectives from mothers of different ethnic backgrounds

Authors:
Rachel S Cane (rachelcane@hotmail.com)
Caroline S Pao (c.pao@virgin.net)
Sheila A McKenzie (mckenzie@rhtch.demon.co.uk)

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Reviewer: Ron Neville
Level of interest: not specified
Advice on publication: Other (see below)

1) This is an interesting and topical paper in an important area.
2) Qualitative research methods are used in an appropriate way. The paper explores the understanding of childhood asthma by three different ethnic groups with experience of the same health care system.
3) The paper is well written and has a good flowing narrative style.
4) The method of recruitment is subject to some bias but the authors are aware of this.
5) It is unclear whether the subjects were responding to the topic of an 'ill child' as opposed to asthma. One would need to expand the work to include case scenarios of other acute childhood illness presentations before making firm conclusions.
6) At times there was a lack of clarity between race and ethnicity - perhaps the authors could define their understanding of the terms in the introduction.
7) One ethnic group conducted the research in their own language whereas the other two used English. There may be issues around translation and interpretation.
8) Case vignettes and subject responses convey information on education and attitudes but do not necessarily predict action in real life. The authors could make this clear.
9) Readers will accept the authors' reasons for not prying into the educational
backgrounds and social class issues of the respondents, but the lack of such information limits the value of the findings. We have no way of knowing if the differences shown are due to ethnic or educational differences. The discussion and conclusions should reflect this.

10) Despite these points of criticism, the paper is still sound and worthy of publication in a reputable peer review forum. Perhaps the authors could address some of the points above in relation to the interpretation of results and then the paper will be ready for publication. It deserves wide readership by health care professionals.

**Competing interests:**

None declared.