Reviewer's report

Title: Patient Preferences for Notification of Normal Laboratory Test Results: A Report from the ASIPS Collaborative

Version: 1 Date: 28 December 2004

Reviewer: Ron Keren

Reviewer's report:

General
This is an important and interesting qualitative analysis of patient preferences for notification of normal laboratory results.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Abstract, Conclusions: The first sentence of the conclusion in the abstract doesn't follow from the results. The study does not test any hypotheses about what decreases patients' concerns and increases likelihood of successful communication. Thus, the first sentence is speculative, extending well beyond the findings of the study. The only concluding statement should be the second sentence, which accurately reflects the findings of the study.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Abstract, Methods: typo, practice-base research network should read practice-based.
Abstract, Results: Ninety percent of participants wanted to be notified...
Introduction, 1st paragraph, The "no news is good news" approach-- was ineffective and POTENTIALLY dangerous.
Methods, Sample, 3rd sentence: We INTENTIONALLY used these settings as the most...
4th sentence: not sure what "theoretical sampling" refers to.
5th sentence: Thus, we INTENTIONALLY recruited participants.
7th sentence: (REPLACE WITH...) The aim of our strategy was not to maximize generalizability, but rather to understand the context and conditions under which normal lab result notification does or does not occur.
8th sentence: All of the 20 participants spoke English and gave VERBAL telephone consent.

Data Analysis, last sentence presents interpretation of results, which should be in discussion section, not methods.

Results
1st sentence, "across participants" not "by participant.
4th sentence, "When exploring the possible modes" Should this read "preferred possible modes?"
The "Important Factors" theme seems like actually several separate themes, on par with the others that receive separate discussion (particularly the security/confidentiality theme and the timeliness theme, both of which receive significant attention in the discussion)-- perhaps break out into separate themes.
The demographics table seems pretty sparse. Were there data on age, education, income (by zip code)? These would greatly help the reader to understand what kind of participants were involved in
this study.

Discussion
This is the highlight of the study. Might consider framing the discussion in terms of TRADEOFFS: Improved timeliness and convenience in exchange for potentially decreased confidentiality/privacy. Also might want to introduce the concept of synchronous (telephone) v. asynchronous (e-mail/voice mail/snail mail) communication and the pro’s and con’s of each in communicating lab info.
Final paragraph: The authors cannot recommend that all lab results be communicated without discussing the logistical challenges of doing so-- cost and time constraints, interpretation of multiple results, etc.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.