Reviewer's report

Title: Selecting renal replacement therapies: what do African American and non-African American patients and their families think others should know? A mixed methods study

Version: 1 Date: 3 August 2012

Reviewer: Paula Ormandy

Reviewer's report:

The paper is well written and succinct. The title, albeit a little long, conveys clearly the focus of the research but could be shorter. The study focus is original in design and adds to the current evidence, although not extensively, a short summary of contextual influences of information type is warranted to better interpret the findings, in particular sub-group analysis. The hypotheses for the study are clearly stated but unfortunately they are not then explored within the discussion (see later comment).

The methods adopted are appropriate and applied with transparency, rigour and reliability reported well with independent moderators of the focus groups and member checking. Content for group interviews such as the criteria priority list are grounded on current evidence. There is mention of a written questionnaire administered to the group individuals at the outset to collate demographics, opinions and interest in educational resources, but the findings from this instrument appear to not be discussed again throughout the paper. It may be useful then to remove this aspect and focus only on the group interviews or consider adding further explanation of the questionnaire, why it was introduced, what data it captured and making clear the findings. The data presented is explicit, and interesting yet not surprising that all the categories listed are identified by each group. The question then is if more categories were added would these also be selected. The qualitative comments although limited to one per category add depth of understanding to a selection. Despite this the findings lack detailed sub-group analysis, particularly with respect to demographic characteristics, was the type if information selected as a priority influenced by age, gender, socioeconomics or ethnicity. Indeed was there a difference between selections of different family members (partner, spouse, sibling etc) inside of groups could have been explored. Having collated this information it would have been useful and interesting to have presented it within the paper, even if no influence could be determined.

The weakness of the paper, which requires further work, lies in the discussion and the full analysis of the demographic characteristics recorded and the findings. The hypotheses listed are not revisited and or proven and having taken the trouble to list many different hypotheses at the outset I would expect some discussion as to whether they were upheld. The relationship between the context of an individual and their information type/need within the literature is explicit and could be reflected on in more depth within the discussion. This would add more
detail with respect to the usefulness of the findings when developing not just ethnically pertinent education programmes but information that is age and gender specific.

The limitations of the work are clearly stated and maybe could be reduced to provide further space to extend the discussion. The conclusions are of interest to health care professionals providing information and ensuring informed and shared decision making takes place.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The study focus is original in design and adds to the current evidence, although not extensively, a short summary of contextual influences of information type is warranted to better interpret the findings, in particular sub-group analysis.

2. There is mention of a written questionnaire administered to the group individuals at the outset to collate demographics, opinions and interest in educational resources, but the findings from this instrument appear to not be discussed again throughout the paper. It may be useful then to remove this aspect and focus only on the group interviews or consider adding further explanation of the questionnaire, why it was introduced, what data it captured and making clear the findings.

3. The findings lack detailed sub-group analysis, particularly with respect to demographic characteristics, was the type if information selected as a priority influenced by age, gender, socioeconomics or ethnicity. Indeed was there a difference between selections of different family members (partner, spouse, sibling etc) inside of groups could have been explored. Having collated this information it would have been useful and interesting to have presented it within the paper, even if no influence could be determined.

4. The weakness of the paper, which requires further work, lies in the discussion and the full analysis of the demographic characteristics recorded and the findings. The hypotheses listed are not revisited and or proven and having taken the trouble to list many different hypotheses at the outset I would expect some discussion as to whether they were upheld. The relationship between the context of an individual and their information type/need within the literature is explicit and could be reflected on in more depth within the discussion. This would add more detail with respect to the usefulness of the findings when developing not just ethnically pertinent education programmes but information that is age and gender specific.

Minor Essential Revisions

None

Discretionary Revisions

5. The title, albeit a little long, conveys clearly the focus of the research but could be shorter.

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