Reviewer's report

Title: What motivates British parents to consent for research? A questionnaire study

Version: 1 Date: 6 October 2006

Reviewer: Alan R Tait

Reviewer's report:

General

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
This is an interesting study examining parents' motivations for allowing their children to participate in a clinical research study. Although the results are not particularly novel, they do provide a UK perspective on consent for pediatric research. The study is well written but I believe that it falls somewhat short of its promise.

1. There is very little description of how the survey was developed. For example, was the survey pilot tested to check for face and content validity?

2. What were the demographics of the study sample? A table describing the parent sample in terms of age, socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, person completing the survey, etc would be helpful. Perhaps, more importantly, one could determine if there were differences in the responses based on any of these demographic variables. How many children were asked to assent to the study?

3. What were the parents' perceptions of the risks and benefits of the PIVOT trial? This is important, as studies show that the perception of risk and benefit is an important predictor of participation. Thus, it would have been interesting to see if parents who felt that there was a disadvantage to participation had perceived the risks as higher than those who felt an advantage.

4. There are no questions related to parents' understanding of the consent information. This is disappointing in that understanding is a primary factor in a parents' decision to allow their child to participate in clinical research.

5. Why do the authors think that parents who declined participation believed that the IV treatment was the superior treatment? Was this due to a preconceived notion or a lack of understanding of the treatment options?

6. Table 1 should be deleted since it adds nothing to the information supplied in the questionnaire.

7. The limitations i.e., non-response and recall bias are potentially significant. The authors need to discuss their potential implications in more detail. The authors also need to acknowledge that this represents parents' responses to a single study and thus the results may not be completely generalizable with respect to other studies with different risk/benefit profiles.

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

1. P9, Contributions spelling

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

1. Fig. 2, Use % rather than n values
What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

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