Reviewer's report

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

Version: 1 Date: 16 October 2006

Reviewer: Christine Grady

Reviewer's report:

General

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------

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

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------

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

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

This is a short, well written report of a survey of 136 parents who consented for their children to participate in a randomized study of treatment for community acquired pneumonia. The survey asked them why they agreed to have their child participate in the study and about a list of factors that might have influenced their decision. The survey also asked the parents whether there were advantages or disadvantages associated with participating, and whether or not they would take part in a similar study in the future.

More parents cited benefit to other children and contribution to science as their main motivation than parents who cited benefit to their own child. Most thought there had been an advantage to participating, most commonly the advantage of contributing to knowledge for treatment of future children.

In evaluating this manuscript, my opinion is:

1. The question is well defined and worthwhile
2. The methods are appropriate and well described. As is true with many surveys, they only had a 59% response rate which disappointed them. Some bias is possible and they have listed this as a limitation. But I think the findings are compelling anyway.
3. Data seem sound. Data reported are simple frequencies and summary statistics. The survey is short with relatively few questions. Many of the questions have a yes/ no response set, some are open-ended. With these data, more complicated analysis is limited. It would be interesting to know more about the 18% who said they felt “obliged” to participate. Also, although the authors say on page 8 that they avoided recall bias by not mailing the questionnaire to all parents at the end of the study, it might be interesting to know at the time the parents completed the survey how long had it been since they had given consent to enroll their child. Also, did the age of the child influence the parent’s response?
4. Discussion is balanced and based on the data.
5. Writing is good and clear.

What next?: Accept after discretionary revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I have no competing interests to declare