Reviewer's report

Title: Identifying the Tuskegee Syphilis Study: Results from the Use of Recall and Recognition Questions in Blacks, Whites and Puerto-Rican Hispanics

Version: 2 Date: 29 May 2009

Reviewer: Annette Dula

Reviewer's report:

The question posed is clear and well defined. The writing is acceptable. The authors do what they say they will do.

Limitations of the work are not stated. While the question is clear, the authors do not tell us the implications (for improving clinical research participation) of the results of their questionnaire. The response of the reader after finishing the article could well be "so what". Although there was little knowledge of the TSS study in all three groups, it was not surprising that of the 3 groups receiving the questionnaire, the most knowledgeable was African Americans and the least knowledgeable was Puerto Ricans from Puerto Rico. What does this finding offer those researchers who are struggling to get more African American, whites, and other minorities to participate in clinical trials? In the ‘Conclusion,’ the authors state that their questionnaire findings contribute to a fuller understanding of the role .... The authors should describe this fuller understanding. If people have only a vague impression of the TSS, how does this explain their lack of trust in research?

Major Compulsory Revisions
1. The authors should describe in their ‘Discussion’ or ‘Conclusion’ sections how lack of detailed knowledge, as described in their questionnaire, contributes to limited participation in clinical trials, or lack of trust in research.
2. The authors' purpose for the paper is clear. However, the reader is not told what the implications of their findings are for researchers or research subjects. How do the findings further minority participation in research?
3. Based on items 1 and 2, the ‘Discussion’ section needs more development.
4. Clarify the justification for using Puerto Ricans in the questionnaire. Is it because they represent another unrepresented minority? Or because they represent a group not living on the US mainland? Why not Puerto Ricans living on the US mainland? Was it only these 3 cities that the authors could get the “desired sample size”?

Discretionary Revisions
1. The authors might consider putting questions 27 and 37 in the body of the paper.
2. The 15 categories listed in the body of the paper should be entered at the bottom/end of the paper as a footnote/endnote.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I, Annette Dula, have no financial or non-financial competing interests regarding this article.