Reviewer’s report

Title: Identifying Structures, Processes, Resources and Needs of Research Ethics Committees in Egypt

Version: 1 Date: 11 April 2010

Reviewer: Reidar Lie

Reviewer’s report:

This is an interesting article that gives a good overview of organizational issues with regard to research ethics review in Egypt. I only have some minor comments.

Minor essential revisions

Table 3 and the process of ethics review

Please clarify exactly what was asked with regard to "use of an expedited review process": Was the question whether the ethics committee has such a system, makes use of it sometimes, or always makes use of it, or some combination of these?

In the text it is stated that "less than half require the use of an informed consent form with a stamped expiration date" This is a bit different from the wording in the table, where it says that the REC sends an approved form with a stamped expiration date on it. Please clarify the exact wording used.

Are the 8 RECs that answer yes to the 3 questions about informed consent forms the same ones? If so, that should be stated in the text.

Table 4 and the importance of training topics

According to the text a scale was used, but the table only reports the number of ethics committees that identifies topics as very important or important. It might be better to report the mean score of each topic across the RECs, i.e. use of placebo controlled trials gets a mean score of x, determination of methods to use risk gets a mean score of y. I also wondered if there were any other topics suggested in the questionnaire that got very low scores, in particular additional topics related to informed consent, given the perceived centrality of that topic. If such topics were deemed not so important for training, this would also be an important piece of information.

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