Author's response to reviews

Title: Experiences with community engagement and informed consent in a genetic cohort study of severe childhood diseases in Kenya

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Responses to editor’s comments on manuscript submitted: Experiences with community engagement and informed consent in a genetic cohort study of severe childhood diseases in Kenya (Marsh, Kamuya, Mlamba, Williams and Molyneux)

Many thanks for reading this manuscript and asking us to provide further clarification before a decision can be taken on whether to send this article for peer review. We have addressed the issues raised in the following ways:

Comment 1: We would like you to provide a more detailed description of the methodology used in the study. In addition, we would like you to further explain how did you analyze the data collected.

The methods on which this study is based draw on action research principles and this theoretical basis as well as detailed methods are now more clearly (hopefully) articulated in the introduction on page 2 and in pages 5-6 under the main methods section.

The change in the introduction on page 2 reads: “At the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI)-Wellcome Trust Research Programme in Kilifi, Kenya, community engagement activities draw on action research processes1, congruent with Reason and Bradbury’s (2006) description of “seeking to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues” [15]. The Kilifi Genetic Birth Cohort (KGBCl) is an example of a study in which action research informed on-going community engagement, and from which the findings and discussion in this paper are drawn.”

Comment 2: In addition, could you please clarify the aims and the outcomes of your study?

The paragraph on page 3 that articulates the aims of the paper has been edited to make this more clear, as follows:

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1 Proposal titled “Strengthening Community Engagement in Health Research in Kilifi: Documenting, evaluating and amending the main communication systems and structures” funded by Wellcome Trust project grant (ref GR074314MA) and KEMRI (ref SCC 1463).
“Against this background, this paper aims to draw on documentation from action research around community engagement to explore the perceptions, experiences and concerns of community members, community leaders and field workers related to KGBC. The analysis of these findings aims to contribute to understanding the strengths and challenges of community engagement in supporting ethical research practice, focusing on issues of communicating about GWAS, the role of field workers in ‘doing ethics’ on the ground and the challenges of community consultation”.