Reviewer's report

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

Version: 4 Date: 6 May 2010

Reviewer: melanie newport

Reviewer's report:

The authors present an interesting paper exploring issues around community engagement and informed consent in a genetic cohort study being conducted in a low income setting where levels of formal education are low. The paper is well-written. The questions are well-defined, the methods are appropriate and well described. The findings are clear and the discussions and conclusions are thoughtful and considered, without evidence of over-interpretation of the data.

Discretionary Revisions

This is an important area of research as the volume of genetic research in sub-Saharan African countries increases. Historically, little attention has been paid to community engagement when designing and executing such studies. Some of the findings are reminiscent of Tekola’s work in Ethiopia, also investigating informed consent for genetic studies. The authors make wish to discuss their findings in relation to those findings. There were some similarities – e.g. confusion between treatment and research, but also differences. Given the focus on a GWAS, the discussion could elaborate more on the findings specific to doing genetic research. Who did the community or field workers think should give consent for example, for studies that have implications not just for the individual studied, but the family too.

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