Reviewer's report

Title: Understanding of Research: a Sri Lankan Perspective

Version: 3 Date: 5 March 2010

Reviewer: Christine Grady

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This manuscript is much clearer with regard to the purpose, methods, and presentation of the study results. I have a few additional questions/suggestions regarding the data and the discussion.

Why did almost 1/3 of the participants not answer two of the main questions of the study? (p. 6) (1. What do you understand by the word “research”?—answered by only 45 of 66; and 2. Are there words similar in meaning to the word “research”?—answered by 44 of 66). Who were they? Was it the same 21 people for each question? Does this skew the results? Or affect the conclusions (that participants had a reasonable understanding of research?). Tables 2 and 3 should include a legend or sample size number. Did all 66 of the participants answer all the other questions (number not provided).

Table 6 is labeled benefits and risks. The themes listed only reflect risks, whereas quotes include benefits. Why did no theme emerge from the benefit statements? Also, none of the quotes in this table reflect the first theme listed (adverse effects from participating in research causing harm or death such as drug trials). Where did this theme come from?

Responses to the question “How are research participants selected” appear to include researchers among “participants”- is that how the question was asked? Or intended?

Table 7 shows that more than half of the respondents would not be willing to join drug research or studies with interventions. There is no discussion of this finding, or any of the data from this table. Yet, on page 8 the authors report that the majority expressed their willingness to participate in future research.

Table 9 reports answers to the checklist as yes or no, whereas the question in the appendix appeared to ask respondents to rate the importance of each of these items.

The discussion may need to be modified based on answers to some of my queries above. Although I would delete the sentence toward the bottom of page 9 that says “This raises questions about public opinion of government involvement in research in Sri Lanka” I just don’t see how that follows from the data. If anything, it might show that the public is not aware of government involvement-or at least that it wasn’t the first thing these respondents thought of.
Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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