Reviewer's report

**Title:** Family and community concerns about post-mortem needle biopsies in a Muslim society

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 7 March 2011

**Reviewer:** Catherine Sassy Molyneux

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Family and community concerns about post-mortem needle biopsies in a Muslim society

Gurley et al.

I think this is an interesting study, of relevance given the interest in PM biopsies not only in the study setting, but also in other clinical/research sites elsewhere in the world. The methodological approach is appropriate, and the paper is well written, raising a range of potential issues of interest to researchers and providers. I think the paper should be revised, bearing in mind the following discretionary and minor essential revisions:

- **Discretionary Revisions** (which are recommendations for improvement but which the author can choose to ignore)
  - Would it be fair to say (see abstract and at end of introduction) that the research was aimed at not only better understanding concerns, but also at contributing to decision-making around the appropriateness of PM biopsies, and to contribute to designing appropriate consent processes.

- **Minor Essential Revisions** (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
  - Emphasise in the abstract, that the issue of gaining trust of a family and community for such a procedure, is no small task, particularly given the relatively small time frame for gaining permission post death. This is noted in the discussion but should be in the abstract.
  - Figure 1 needs to be explained. It seems to be far too linear and simplified to be applicable to every single case, so needs some explanation in relation to the data.
  - Ethics sections. What about the ethics of holding these discussions with families. Did it raise new concerns? Was there counseling support offered during or post interviews?
  - There appear to be some major dilemmas and potential ‘harm’ coming from interventions with PM biopsies where for example mothers have different preferences to fathers, or families from the wider community. The former in particular may have been difficult to raise in the types of forums held in this study. This should be considered in the discussion (ie these potential harms) and
as a limitation of the study (ie missing getting sufficient detail about the harms; particularly as there are likely to be very different types of gender relations within families, depending on age and access to income; and education etc, even within a generally patriarchal society).

- The community engagement requirements for research/practice involving PM biopsies are potentially challenging, particularly given the time frame as noted above. Include a discussion about the importance of scientific or public health (and individual) value and numbers involved in the study/intervention, in deciding about whether to get involved in this challenging and potentially highly sensitive area.

**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