Reviewer's report

Title: Procedure versus process: ethical paradigms and the conduct of qualitative research

Version: 2 Date: 23 August 2012

Reviewer: Michael McDonald

Reviewer's report:

The author has addressed a number of concerns that I expressed in my initial review of this paper. There is a much clearer focus on qualitative research and less in the way of large generalizations about biomedical research. I was particularly glad to see the emphasis on creating a climate of ethical responsibility amongst qualitative researchers as opposed to simply the negative recommendation to remove oppressive oversight by RECs. The author might want to think about whether some combination of internal ethical socialisation and external oversight by more knowledgeable RECs (including particularly those working in qualitative research) might not be the best of both worlds.

For some other concerns (e.g., the lack of a more grounded and contextualised discussion of challenging issues in regard to informed consent and personal information), the author has responded that the objective in this paper was to offer an overview rather than a detailed exploration of specific issues. This is fair enough though I still think that there are much more difficult and challenging issues to be dealt with in such areas than the author indicates. I do hope that the author will in other publications explore some of these areas.

I still have significant differences with the author, but they are of the sort that are best responded to in open debate rather than in the process of manuscript review.

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:

No competing interests