Author's response to reviews

Title: Perspectives on the ethical concerns and justifications of the 2006 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention HIV testing: HIV screening policy changes

Authors:

Michael J Waxman (mwaxman@hotmail.com)
Roland C Merchant (rmerchant@lifespan.org)
M Teresa Celada (celada_teresa@wheatonma.edu)
Melissa A Clark (melissa_clark@brown.edu)

Version: 2 Date: 22 July 2013

Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editor,

I thank you and the reviewers very much in reviewing the manuscript that I submitted.

It is obvious that the reviewers were experienced and thoughtful. I very much appreciate all of the excellent feedback that the reviewers gave.

**Regarding the comments and recommendations from referee #2, Dr. Haukoos.**

We changed universal screening to nontargeted screening as Dr. Haukoos suggested.

Dr. Haukoos accurately pointed out that in our discussion section we confused the important details of the ACA stipulations and USPSTF recommendations. This paragraph was revised in the discussion section appropriately.

Dr. Haukoos also suggested that we elaborate on other potential future research, especially as it pertains to targeted versus nontargeted testing. We did expand on this in the discussion section.

We fixed the grammatical errors that Dr. Houck was found in line 5 of the background section.

**Regarding the comments by referee #2, Dr. Johansson.**

Dr. Johansson comments that the methods section might be enhanced by discussing more on "why this analysis method has been chosen rather than alternative analysis methods" and "what are the advantages and disadvantages of categorizing themes under prespecified headlines"

We restructured and elaborated a bit in the last paragraph of the background section in order to explain in a little more detail why we chose the type of analysis we did. We added a sentence under protocol development to discuss how the protocol design allowed for the stated goals.

Dr. Johansson comments that more could be discussed regarding why we chose the questions that we chose in the qualitative interviews. However, I believe that there is sufficient detail in the protocol development section that describes why we chose these four ethical domains and developed the questions that we asked.

Regarding the feedback on the results and discussion of the paper.

It is apparent that Dr. Johansson’s feedback was very thoughtful and it is very much appreciated. I definitely understand what he is saying in regards to restructuring the result in
the discussion section. Nevertheless, Dr. Johansson is essentially suggesting that we reanalyze the data, and restructure the majority paper. While I understand the reasons for this and realize that this might add to the paper, our research team does not necessarily believe that it would be worthwhile to undertake this endeavor. There are a few of reasons why we believe this.

First, further data analyses and restructuring of the manuscript would be quite a significant undertaking by our research team and would likely take some time. I do not believe that we could have accomplished this in the one-month or so that was given to complete the revisions. While the suggested revisions would very likely help the paper, there is always tension between putting out the best work possible and making so many iterations that the work never gets published. It has already been about two years since the first part of the research project was published in BMC medical ethics. While I believe that the data is still pertinent, I also believe that the benefits of further data analysis and restructuring of the paper would not be worth the time this would take to do so.

Second, this manuscript is essentially part 2 of the same qualitative analysis. The first manuscript published in BMC medical ethics entitled, Perspectives on the ethical concerns and justifications of the 2006 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention HIV testing recommendations. The format (not content) used in this manuscript is almost identical to our previous published manuscript. While changing formats may very improve the structure of this paper, one could also argue that it also makes to keep similar both manuscripts that report on the same project.

Third, while it is likely that further analysis and restructuring would add to the paper, it is also a possibility that the reiteration would not necessarily improve the overall manuscript. We would need to see in order to be sure about this.

Finally, Dr. Johansson suggested that we chop (for lack of a better word) much of the text and much of the tables. While I do understand that there is some benefit in concise writing, it is our belief that, if a word limit is not important (for example in online journals), then including all of the data does not necessarily detract from the paper. The way the paper is structured right now, the reader can focus on the discussion if they prefer to get the crux of the conclusions.

Instead of restructuring the paper, however, we did take into account the feedback and added some additional complexity to the discussion section which is, we believe, at least in line with what Dr. Johansson was trying to get at.

In addition, the following sentence is now included in the manuscript: The Rhode Island Hospital Institutional Review Board approved this study.

Sincerely,

Michael Waxman
Please contact with me any questions. 401.429.3045. mwaxman@hotmail.com