Reviewer’s report

Title: Knowledge and Attitudes to Personal Genomic Testing for Complex Diseases among Nigerians

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Reviewer: Jantina De Vries

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This is a paper that discusses perspectives of Nigerian people living in an urban and peri-urban area on ‘genomic tests for complex disease’. The novelty of the paper lies in its focus on an African country – no published work yet considers the views of African people on DTC genomic tests. However, I have some concerns about the paper, which I outline below:

1. The paper concludes, in the discussion, that “It is notable that the participants showed positive attitudes towards genomic tests and potential benefits despite knowing almost nothing about the test”. As a social scientist, this signals to me a fundamental problem in the research design, namely: how can one seek to solicit people’s perspectives on an issue that they know nothing about? When participants give you their opinions or views, are they really pertinent to the topic under discussion? And how do you verify that? In other words, I would be concerned about the validity of the data thus collected, and I think the authors need to say much more in their paper about how they have dealt with this challenge. This needs to come out in the methods section, in the section on ‘limitations’, and it also needs to be expanded in the sections “Knowledge of Genomic Tests”. Exactly what did participants understand, how many people understood anything, what did they think these tests were all about, and how does all of that inform the validity of the data? (reading the quotes used in the paper, I have a strong suspicion that many of the informants confused ‘DTC genomic tests’ with other medical tests – e.g. quotes stating that participants can ‘test themselves’ could be taken to resonate with pregnancy tests that can be done at home, and comments about confidentiality could draw experiences w.r.t. HIV test results and other medical tests. How did the researchers rule out this possibility?).

2. The paper introduces some very controversial potential uses of DTC tests (for instance, use in children and as a prenatal screen) which are not engaged with or discussed. The use of genetic diagnostic tests in children is hugely controversial, for instance, and a lively literature has discussed various ethical considerations that may go into deciding whether to offer/use genetic tests for children. The paper does not engage with this literature yet it aims to use its data to inform that debate. Similarly, to my knowledge, DTC personal genomic tests are not used anywhere in the world for prenatal diagnosis and such use may even be illegal in many countries. Again, the authors should give much more credit to the myriad of ethical considerations that such use raises (and also satisfy point 1 above).
3. The paper needs to critically revise language used, and also check for completeness (for instance, Section C on pg. 12 reads ‘A respondent said’ and is not followed by anything).

5. On pg. 15 Section “Willingness to do genomic tests” – I wonder how the Native American example is relevant to the Nigerian example? The Native American population are, in some ways, an exceptional case (in terms of historical marginalisation in the country and more recent recognition of their rights). Does the same apply to all the Nigerian informants and their population groups?

Required revisions:
1. expand the methods section, the section ‘knowledge of genomic tests’ and the ‘limitation’ section to reflect methodological challenges in the study;
2. tie the debates around the use of DTC in children and foetuses to relevant ethics literature and signal that the prenatal use of DTC genomic tests may in fact be illegal in many countries.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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