Author's response to reviews

Title: Mixed-Methods Study on Perceptions Towards Use of Rapid Ethical Assessment to Improve Health Research Informed Consent Processes in a Low-Income Setting

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Author's response to reviews: see over
To: The Editor-In-Chief, BMC Medical Ethics

From: Adamu Addissie MD MPH MA

Thanks a lot for all the reviews and the comments provided from the reviewers through the editors. We have addressed and resubmitted a revised version of the manuscript entitled "Mixed Methods Study on Perceptions Towards Use of Rapid Ethical Assessment to Improve Health Research Informed Consent Processes in a Low-Income Setting". And we look forwards to hear the final outcomes in due course.

Reviewer's report and Responses

Reviewer: Sassy S Molyneux

Thanks a lot for your reviews. Our responses are indicated in blue next to your comments.

Reviewer's report: I enjoyed reading this revised paper and feel it now makes a stronger and clearer contribution. Most of my suggestions have been covered. I have only a few minor discretionary revisions that I feel would strengthen the paper further:

R: Thanks a lot for your kind review and we have accommodated the comments and responded to the points point by point below.

Abstract conclusion: add ‘perceived to be’ before correctable gaps

R: Comment addressed.

Page four: add [or ‘field’] before community workers to make a nice link to the growing body of work on the centrality of fieldworker in (ethical) research practice

R: Comment addressed.

Page four: add some words before the sentence beginning: ‘It has been assumed…’.
For example ‘One element of this feasibility is likely to be the perceived relevance and acceptability of REA to researchers and research ethics reviewers’.

R: Comment addressed.

Discussion: There is a small sense of lack of flow – eg some repetition in page 14 para 2 ‘one suggestion made was to conduct REA as part of the traditional pre-test’… and para 5 ‘one suggestion forwarded to address this concern was to marry REA with the pre-test part of research…’. Can these be put together somehow? Also, is not a key
concern here not only the resources, but that this REA, done well, might raise issues relevant to study design and therefore best done in advance of most pre-tests?

R: Comment addressed.

Limitations: I think a limitation with the questions on ethical pre-assessment are that they focus for some of the questions on ‘study participants’ rather than community members, and that there was a need to discuss qualitatively what was meant by REA in in-depth interviews, suggesting this questions on REA was not well understood in survey questions (and would people who feel REA is one potentially crucial approach to address consent processes answer yes or no?). I think it highlights the essential nature of mixed methodology research, or qualitative studies, for at least some elements of what you were exploring.

R: In the survey, we asked about potential study participants rather than the community. But in the IDIs we were able to explore more. This is now included in the third paragraph of the discussion section.

Page thirteen, para 2: Insert ‘qualitative’ between ‘current’ and ‘findings’

R: Comment addressed.

Page 14 first para (strong suggestion): delete the rest of the sentence from ‘the advantage of REA…. Up to ‘featured in the literature’. It is too contestable and not necessary.

R: Comment accepted. The indicated section has been deleted.

Page 14 para four sentence from ‘one respondent stressed…. ‘ I don’t understand the sentence. Also insert ‘often’ before ‘require REA’.

R: The sentence rephrased as ‘Such longitudinal studies require repeated and long term encounters between researchers and the community’. As it was meant to illustrate the importance of REA in such studies.

A few typos/small wording issues: Check first para of discussion – there’s an extra full stop – and one missing from para 2 page 12 (sorry for level of detail here!); a ‘his’ on page 13 should be ‘this’, and ‘he’ on page 14 should be ‘the’. ‘Relatively’ on page 14 should be ‘relatively’?

R: Thank you for the thorough reading. The indicates and additional typos are now edited.