Reviewer's report

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

Version: 2  Date: 20 March 2014

Reviewer: Sassy S Molyneux

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:

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

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

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’.

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?

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.

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

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.

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

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’. ‘Relevantly’ on page 14 should be ‘relatively’?

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

**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