Reviewer’s report

Title: Translational ethics: Which gap? In what direction? What kind of intervention? And whose responsibility?

Version: 3 Date: 31 July 2014

Reviewer: Lucy Frith

Reviewer’s report:

The concept behind this paper is a good one, and it is great to see the discussion started by Cribb being taken up in the literature, I think that the issues raised and the debates are really important to bioethics and therefore the subject is of great current relevance.

Overall there needs to be more examples to illustrate the arguments made and more development of the arguments, counter arguments and discussion rather than asserting conclusions without providing enough justification.

My main comments on this paper are about elaboration on the points and some minor structural changes.

1. I think the introduction could be edited, the paper takes a long time to start and I think the issues raised there could be expressed more succinctly.

2. page 6 first paragraph, sentence, should read ‘This topology invites greater…’ no need for the ‘to’

3. page 7 end of first paragraph, I think this definition of translation research could be mentioned and set aside earlier, much of the material in the ‘initial distinctions’ section could be put in an edited introduction, as we are on page 7 and the substance of the paper has not yet begun.

4. generally, throughout the paper I think that some examples would be useful, so at the bottom of page 7 beginning of page 8, an example of these different areas would be useful to make the point clearer and more concrete.

5. page 9, under the heading, is ‘coincidence’ the right word here? This paragraph is a bit confusing and I think the argument needs to be spelled out more clearly as to why it should not be based on substantive conclusions? And what are the counter arguments to this?

6. It strikes me that there are links with the literature on moral expertise here that could be made (Singer, Archard etc) on the points made at the top of page 11.

7. page 11, second paragraph, why does this have to be provenance of theoretical researchers? I think there needs to be more discussion and counter arguments throughout the article to more clearly justify claims being made.

Page 13 end of first paragraph – this raises interesting points about the responsibilities of bioethicists and is it enough to say I was doing theoretical work and therefore I have no responsibility? And corresponding if one says I am writing as a citizen does that matter is one is a bioethicist or not?
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:
I have no competing interests