Reviewer's report

Title: Public's attitudes on participation in a biobank for research: An Italian survey.

Version: 2  Date: 30 July 2014

Reviewer: Conrad Fernandez

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1. Page 5 line 12. In reading the discussion it appears that all the participants are exclusively family members but it is unclear in the way this section is worded as to whether or not those approached to take part in the questionnaires were the patients themselves, a family member of a patient or both. Please clarify. If both, Table 1 should indicate the demographics of each group of participants and the authors should consider analyzing the responses between groups to see if these were different. If only family members, please clarify if they were interviewed alone or in the presence of a patient and if this might have influenced responses (and the later strong voiced support for research in dementia).

2. Page 5 line 13. Why were previous participants in biobanks excluded from this study. How many met this category of exclusion. They would seem to offer a unique perspective.

3. Page 5 line 21 The authors state: “The study was favourably reviewed by the IRCCS Fatebenefratelli ethics committee.” Please clarify that this means the study received formal approval.

4. Page 6 Questionnaires. Only one of the questionnaires has been previously published. The authors should describe more about how all of these were developed, whether these were pilot tested and whether or not there was any attempt at validation for any of the questionnaires. If it is the case that these steps were not taken then lack of validation should be described as a limitation. Access to these questionnaires should be offered.

5. Page 6 Questionnaires. More detail should be provided. How many questions in each, how long did they take to complete.

6. Page 6 line 18-page 7 line 12. It is not clear to me if this analysis refers to previous analysis of a different study that informs this one or of the current study. If it is of the current study, then this section describes a result not a method and should be in the results section.

7. Page 7 line 5. It is not clear to me what the concept “freedom of research” is meant to convey. More detail is needed to understand this element.

8. Page 7 line 15. The authors should be more precise in their reporting. Exactly how many were approached to make 80% response rates. How many were patients and how many family members? How many of the respondents came from one family unit?
9. Page 14 line 13. Promotion of research as described does not seem to me linked to the previous statement. Please clarify or modify.

10. Page 14 line 22- page 15 line 2. While this statement about discrimination makes sense, the authors should be clear if this is their opinion or that reflected by the participants in this survey.

11. Page 16 The authors should explore briefly other reasons for a difference in the response by the Eurobarometer study, the ECs and this study. For example = a key variable not discussed is the formulation and validation of understanding of the question about this issue. How different were the questions in the different studies examining this issue?

12. Discussion could be shorter given that much of what is said repeats the results.

13. Discussion should include a specific section on limitations of the study.

14. Table 3 would be more accessible if organized in a hierarchical way - for example by highest percentage of required elements by the public (or by the ECs) and then where there are significant differences that they be highlighted in some way eg bold type. As presented it seems random.

15. Table 3. Unclear what “information on samples property” means. Similarly - what does “solidarity” in the context of voluntary consent mean.

16. Table 3. Surprising that benefit sharing has a significant p value given the small difference in numbers. Please confirm this is correct.

17. Table 5. The title of the table should be self-explanatory including if this is the respondents opinions or the ECs.

18. Figure 1 does not add substantially to the paper. Suggest delete.

19. References: There have been quite a few publications in this area in the last year. The references cited could be more comprehensive (but I realize that there may be a journal described limit in number of references). If allowable, suggest increase these.

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.