Reviewer's report

Title: Recruitment and informed consent of research participants in the extremely high density multicultural population of Doha, Qatar in the Arabian Gulf Region

Version: 2 Date: 26 February 2013

Reviewer: Mayyada Wazaify

Reviewer's report:

• Discretionary Revisions
  - I think that the title is long and this is unnecessary to mention since all your readers will know where Qatar is on the map! On the other hand, more important amendment is suggested for the title (see below-major revisions). In addition, the title is general and does not clearly reflect the work.

• Minor essential revisions
  - Abstract/Results/1ns paragraph: You don't start a sentence with a number, please write in words.
  - Abstract/Conclusions: "Although we achieved 80% participation among subjects approached, barriers to recruitment and informed consent still emerged." --> This sentence is NOT a "conclusion". I prefer to delete it. Also, the sentence: "North American recruitment and consent procedures are compatible but with caveats" stands out and probably has no place in the abstract. It is not clear or relevant to the text before or after. I prefer to delete it.
  - Background/1st paragraph: The authors keep using the word "Western" standards, which is a bit vague! Do you mean the standards of ICH guidelines of GCP? OR Declaration of Helsinki OR Nuremberg Code? Especially when talked about Dawson and Kass's study: " found that most researchers believed US regulations should allow more flexibility in informed consent regulations compared to current Western standards." which ones are 'Western'? The International ones?

In addition, the term that is commonly used in the literature is 'International' guidelines such as in the following publication:


- Background/3rd paragraphs: when talking about the 10 articles found in literature: I take it that these are references 13-21 as denoted in the text. Well, these are 9 not 10. Please add the 10th reference in the text.
- Background/3rd paragraph and throughout the Background: It is still unclear to the reader if we are talking about 'research' or 'clinical care'. In this paragraph, it is confusing as some of the studies searched in the literature where described to have had discussed "influence of cultural idiosyncrasies on the level of disclosure and the informed consent process in clinical care" while the last sentence of the same paragraph talked about "None of the articles addressed subject reactions to compensation for participating in research"!!

- Results section/Motivation to participate: In some instances, the authors mentioned the nationality of the interviewee (e.g. an Indian woman stated...) while this was not mentioned in the rest. I think out of consistency and importance to link to motivation to participate, this should be included.

- Discussion: A typo --> please be consistent in referencing. You mention here Khan and Tamimi, 2009 while the test are numbers e.g. [17].


- Discussion/statement: "As in many studies, the skills and the charisma of the RAs can influence recruitment rates" also needs referencing and more clarification in light of previous studies as mentioned.

- In general, I like Table 5. However, I think participants in addition to confidentiality, should have been assured that their participation in the study would never affect their receipt of health care, despite any negative comments that may have been mentioned during the interview.

- Major compulsory revisions
  - The title should reflect that the 'recruitment and informed consent' we are talking about here are for "Research" NOT "Medical Practice". Important! While reading through the text and up until I got to the end of Background section, I was still confused whether this is asking about IC of research or medical procedures.

- Methods/data collection procedures: It is not clear to the reader whether these interviews were for the sake of this study OR for the main goal of the whole project which is to develop a self-administered tool to evaluate health services. It is confusing to the reader. I think this should be re-written in a clearer format.

- Methods: How long did the interview last for in average? please add.

- Results/Informed consent process: It is not clear what you mean by "no meaningful difference"! Do you mean they were equal or what?

- Results/Interview recording: The way I understood the objective of this study is to qualitatively describe reasons observed and/or reported for declining participation- to the main large project- by approached individuals. The main large project was a self-administered questionnaire, wasn't it? So, it did not include tape-recording. I think this is again confusing to the reader! By this part,
the researchers are describing the vulnerability of subjects to the qualitative part which included recording not the large project.

- Results/Interview recording/paragraph 2/Line 2: wanted to share (not shared).

- Results/Negative consequences: It is obvious from the quotes that the fear of negative consequences was observed only among the non-Qatari group. Were there any among Qatari group? a point that is worth mentioning and discussing. Again this also applies to the Discussion section when the authors discussed vulnerability. Was this only linked to the Arabic language group too? Only expatriate workers? what about the Qatari participants. I think this is important since the study is being conducted in Qatar.

- Discussion: As for the first sentence, I found through my search few papers that talked about ICF and consent preferences in some Arab countries. I believe that these could be a useful addition to the discussion:


2. Mamoun Ahram1, Areej Othman2 and Manal Shahrouri3. Public support and consent preference for biomedical research and biobanking in Jordan. European Journal of Human Genetics advance online publication 12 September 2012; doi: 10.1038/ejhg.2012.213


- Discussion/regarding statement "Fourth, particularly in the case of a working spouse, some would not want to contradict or compromise preferences or policies of a spouse’s employer." did the authors collect information about the interviewee's spouses?? This has not been mentioned in the Methods/Results sections.

- Discussion/the last sentence: " This speaks to genuine efforts by Qatari society to be open to consumers and to reflect on making improvements to the system" How come the authors are talking about Qatari society and most of the participants were non-Qatari! This is also obvious from the respondents in Table 4.

- General comment: I think the study provides information about recruitment, motivation, obstacles, vulnerability and compensation perception. Yet, the information about the perception and acceptability of the "concept" of in addition to the readability and clarity of informed consent among Qatari society is insufficient.

- The Discussion part involves a repletion to the Results and it lacks "discussing" the results in light of international literature.
- Conclusions: again the term "Western"! (please refer to my previous comments above). Also, you don't expect to see references in the Conclusions section.

**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 in relation to this paper.