Reviewer's report

Title: Outcome of a training program on research ethics among clinicians and scientists in a Nigerian university

Version: 1 Date: 12 July 2007

Reviewer: Wendy A Rogers

Reviewer's report:

General
This is an interesting report on the effectiveness of a capacity-building research ethics training workshop held at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. It provides useful international comparative data on the effectiveness of research ethics training. The findings as reported indicate that the training improved participants’ knowledge of principles of research ethics, international guidelines and functioning of research ethics committees. However, greater detail in the presentation of results is necessary to clarify how these have been calculated.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

1. Knowledge of principles of research ethics and guidelines (Page 12).
Only two principles are listed in the pre-test results. Is this because participants could only identify two? If not, what was the third?

2. In the same section, it is reported: “The mean scores for knowledge of the principles of research ethics rose from 0.67 out of 3 points to 2.25 at post-test; this dropped to 2.19 at followup (p<0.05).” This is the most impressive increase in knowledge reported in the paper, but it is not clear how this was tested, nor to which question in the questionnaire these results relate as separate results are reported for questions 5 and 6. Please can the authors clarify this.

3. Application of the principles of research ethics (page 13)
The results for this section are presented as percentages in Table 2, so it is not clear how the authors calculated the increase in mean scores from “2.64 at pre-test to 3.05 and 3.24 at post-test and follow-up respectively (p<0.05).” Please can this be explained. This also applies to the following section which also reports scores out of 7, rather than reflecting the percentages in table 3.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

1. In Table 2 (which somewhat confusingly reports the answers to questions 8-14 but is not labelled as such), it would help the reader to know which principles are considered to be the correct ‘applications’ for the statements, rather than labelling each statement “true” or “false”.

2. In the discussion, it may be worth commenting further on the difficulties of testing the effectiveness of research ethics training using a questionnaire. I’d be interested in the authors’ views about alternative methods, for example, interviews with a selection of participants to identify what they found most valuable about the course, or repeat interviews with members of the IRB at 12 months to see if the quality of applications had changed following the workshop.

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

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 not competing interests.