Reviewer’s report

Title: Informed consent in Sri Lanka: a survey among ethics committee members

Version: 4 Date: 26 November 2007

Reviewer: Akira Akabayashi

Reviewer’s report:

General
In this study, members of Sri Lanka’s ethics review committees were interviewed about the design of printed explanations and consent forms. While discussion of international research review design is important as design standards currently vary by country, this paper would require many revisions before being considered for publication.

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

First, it is not entirely clear what is new or important about this study. Though the authors offer a discussion on how the content of printed explanations and consent forms can be problematic in the approval of international research involving Sri Lanka and the UK, the discussion does not sufficiently highlight the novelty or importance of this topic.

“ERC” is used to designate both “ethics review committee” and “ethical review committee.” The expression “ethics committee” also appears in the manuscript, which is confusing.

It is not clear when this study was conducted or what selection criteria were used for inclusion of committees in the study. It is also unclear why subjects were interviewed about the WHO checklist. Additional information about each of these points should be included in the manuscript.

On page seven, the authors state that the SLAAS ethics committee is not a research ethics committee. The reason for including interviews with members of this committee should be reviewed.

There are also a number of language and spelling errors which require review and correction. In addition, references must be consistent; it is not appropriate to quote from works still in the submission process (Ref 12).

Finally, the quality of the discussion is poor overall. While studies from Sri Lanka are welcome, I look forward to more refined submissions.

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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)

Typo (examples)
- p. 4 top: Back ground --> Background
- p. 4 line 5: ERCs primary duty --> ERCs' primary duty
- p. 5 line 1: the ERC members views --> ERC members' views
- p. 9 line 9: non invasive --> non-invasive
- p. 9 line 14: without written consent --> need period
- p. 11 line 7: safe guard --> safeguard

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

**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:** Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

**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'