Author's response to reviews

Title: Understanding and Retention of informed consent process among Parents in a Rural Northern Ghana

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editor,

MS: 1699410949145022

I would like to resubmit the revised manuscript, MS: 1699410949145022 for your consideration. Substantial revisions have been made as suggested by the reviewers to the script to improve upon the description. All sections especially the background, methods and discussion have been substantially revised to reflect the comments from the three reviewers as described below.

The reviewer 1 (A.Tait) raised several questions around the underliested areas:
How the information about the study was initially presented. Was written (i.e., a consent document) and verbal disclosure provided? And how many elements of consent were discussed. Was this information standardized in any way? Also, on average, how much time was taken to explain the study to the parent(s)? How were the parental subjects selected? How long after the consent information was given were the parents interviewed? How retention /understanding was measured. How differences in coding/interpretation of the open-ended responses between the two research assistants reconciled?

A revised section under the methods, design and population, from pages 9 to 11 has addressed most of the concerns raised by this reviewer above. Moreover this has also clarified the results as revised and presented.
In addition to the above, additional concerns have been addressed under the revised discussion section.

The reviewer 2 (C. Grady) also raised several issues around the underliested areas:
To know more about the malaria study. Secondly, it would be helpful to be clearer about several features of the consent study. What kind of questions or analysis was used to measure each? Including at least a sample of the questions used to evaluate understanding or retention would also be useful’ What was the initial consent process like? How much time had elapsed? How much? Are there risks that they were told about that they don’t remember? Or benefits that they perceive but that they were not told about?
Information were the participants likely to have received since their initial consent?
Again these issues are related to the ones raised above and are addressed under the new section under study design and population from pages 9 to 11 and hence have clarified some of the concerns on the results that reviewer two also raised.

**The reviewer 3 (S Molyneux) also raised several issues around the underliested areas:**

There are now several detailed empirical studies that have been carried out in low-income settings; including within rural sub-Saharan Africa. Greater reference to this literature, including around levels of understanding and factors contributing to this, is required to convince readers of the contribution the paper is making.

**Additional literature and citation have been made.**

More information is needed about the main study for which understanding and retention is being examined (eg what were the procedures, benefits and risks involved?

What was the blood for? – Only for research? The consenting processes and information given out by the main study. Ie who did the consenting, what steps were involved/where, what was the key information imparted, and what was considered an adequate understanding in each main theme? How long after this information was the consent study carried out? This is important in order to meet the stated goal of suggesting ways to improve current practice. No indication of what the questions looked like; b) no stated preliminary qualitative work in the study areas suggesting that assumptions have been made regarding understanding. They would also have to be compared with the broader literature noted above, and be related to practicable recommendations in order to ‘suggest ways to improve upon the existing practices’ (study goal).

**The new section study design and population from pages 9 to 11 has addressed most of the concerns raised above and hence have clarified some of the results that reviewer two raised concerns. The section under discussion have also been expanded and referenced further.**

Thank you

Oduro