Reviewer's report

Title: Patients’ perception and actual practice of informed consent, privacy and confidentiality in general medical outpatient departments of two tertiary care hospitals of Lahore

Version: 1 Date: 17 March 2008

Reviewer: María D. D Pérez-Cárceles

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The paper is interesting since little information exists on this topic in developing countries. It reveals that in countries with no bioethical legislation and where patients’ rights are of little importance the adherence to bioethical standards is scant. There is also a marked difference between public and private health care.

Some suggested modifications follow.

“Material and methods”

1. The meaning of OPD should be included the first time it is used.
2. In the second paragraph (page 5) when the authors mention “in the light of existing literature on the subject”, some recent bibliographical references should be included.
3. The section should mention the names of the hospitals and point out which are public and which are private.
4. Please give more information on the questions asked to the patients and the possibilities of each of the replies and how they were graded. Also, it would helpful if a better description were given of what he “trained data collectors” evaluated (attitudes, behaviour, etc,) and how the ……were graduated.
5. “Trained data collectors” were health service workers, medical students, or what exactly?
6. What was evaluated in “informed consent”? Was it orally given, in written form? What was mentioned – risk, surgery, anaesthesia, pharmacological treatments……?

“Results”

1. The results section needs more details, avoiding a discussion on the same. The most interesting results should be mentioned.
2. Mean ages should be include. Standard deviation and age range of the patients in both hospitals, too.
3. The profession of the patients is interesting and closely related with their educational level. Such information should be included in the sociodemographic variables.
4. Since the discussion mentions that there were differences between both
hospitals and that they could be justified by differences in the sociodemographic characteristics of the patients, a statistical test should be applied to ascertain whether statistically significant differences existed.

5. It is not clear from Table 1 which hospital is private and which public.

6. Given that the BMC Medical Ethics is an international publication, perhaps some idea should be given of the value of the currency mentioned is, as this might help thread the socioeconomic profile of the patients.

7. Tables 4 and 5 mention “observed and graded”; however the term “graded” would be best omitted since only observed and non-observed data are included.

8. In the same tables (4 and 5), a statistical treatment should be applied to ascertain whether there were significant differences between “actual adherence concluded by data collector” and “patient perception”

Discussion
I think that the results should be contrasted with those obtained in other countries.
Lastly, some typographical errors need to be corrected.

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

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

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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"