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

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Reviewer: Helena Leino-Kilpi

Reviewer's report:

1. General
This is an interesting manuscript, informing about situation with informed consent in Pakistan.

There are some points to clarify, before I could accept this for publication and they are as follows.

2. Purpose of the study
Purpose of the study and reason to report this in an international journal remains unclear.

This seems to be nationally important and gives reasons to national developmental work in this field in Pakistan – but what is the meaning for international audience?

Please, clarify the purpose, particularly for international audience.

(All research needs to have an international meaning. Even this was interesting to read, it is not enough)

3. Introduction
There are relevant international references mentioned in the introduction.

The situation in Pakistan, however, is very shortly mentioned. I was missing of any references (preferably in English –if there are). Also, you mention, that there are some efforts to create ethical guidelines – what are these? It would be important to know the national situation better, for understanding the results.

What about, for example, the ethical education of physicians and other health care workers?

Also, it would be very welcome to explain, why only medical doctors are included in the study? (There must be a national explanation for that) In many Western countries, nurses are involved in informed consent process and they –in collaboration with physicians- take care of the information to patients, or they check, that the patients have been informed.

4. Material and methods
The informants of the study were patients from two hospitals (138 females and 48 males). Data were collected by researchers and patients.

There are not, however, any research questions presented. It would be important to have them, because empirical data is easier to understand, if the reader knows, what questions were presented.

Also, I do not find the criteria of hospital selection (there was one public and one private- but how were these selected? Just give a short explanation for this)

Statistical methods are very traditional.

5. Results
Results are presented in 5 Tables, all rather clear.
Results are not, however, described at all in the results section.
This is up of the Journal, but I would miss at least a short description of all tables, not only listing them!

6. Discussion
Discussion is rather long and I find it interesting. Here also some results are presented.

Also this text in Discussion – as in the whole manuscript – stays only nationally in Pakistan. It would be important to draw some more general conclusions and compare, if there are similarities in international literature. For example, there seem to be differences between public and private hospitals – this difference maybe seen also in other countries, but authors do not seem to know the situation in other literature (or at least they do not mention anything about that). It would be important to compare the results with possible existing international literature (as is the case usually in scientific reporting).

There is existing literature in the realization of informed consent and privacy in literature and I suggest, that the authors use also it.

7. Summary
This is an interesting study and national report. The purpose for reporting this in its present form for international audience remains unclear.