Reviewer’s report

**Title:** A qualitative study of professional and client perspectives on information flows and decision aid use.

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 14 September 2011

**Reviewer:** Karen Sepucha

Reviewer’s report:

This paper presents the results of some qualitative interviews and focus groups that were conducted during the evaluation of a decision aid for carers of people with dementia. There is relatively little published data on the appropriateness of decision aids in this situation—both in terms of the medical situation of dementia and surrogate decision makers. The authors present some interesting results that were found that highlight some discrepancies in the views of different participants in this process on the role of carers and the amount of information that should be provided. The paper is well written and makes an important contribution, however, it would benefit from addressing and clarifying the following issues:

**Major compulsory revisions:**

1. It is not clear whether the focus on positioning and provision of realistic information were factors about which the authors had some a priori hypotheses (it is implied in the introduction though never explicitly mentioned). Please clarify and state in the introduction and methods whether this is reporting an interesting finding from the qualitative work or whether this was driven by a priori hypotheses with items explicitly designed to probe these issues.

2. How long had the carers in the study been dealing with spouses/others with dementia? Is there any sense that their views may have changed over time and with experience? There are data that people’s desire for information and desire for participation in decision making are not stable and change over time and situations. Please comment on whether the carers’ views were as uniform as they appear in the results.

3. Please include numbers in the results section for how many participants exhibited each of the positions for Figure 1. Currently there are only numbers for the first position where 12/13 carers were cited as promoting the first view. It would be helpful to understand how many were in the other views. Also, was there any evidence that participants held multiple views (or with respect to item 2 that participants’ views changed)?

4. I had a hard time making sense of Figure 2. For example, what does “useful too to work though with carers” mean? Does the decision aid being situated in the middle mean anything? From the text it appears different participants may place it differently along these axes yet you have the DA in the middle? Here too it would is important to have numbers and types of participants who categorized
the DA in each of the quadrants. Please include those numbers in the text and/or figure.

5. There are no limitations mentioned, yet clearly there should be some for this paper (e.g. sampling etc). Please reflect on limitations of the methods, analyses and results.

Minor revisions:

1. In the introduction and throughout the text there is no consistency in terminology for the different key groups and this makes following the paper difficult. Please use consistent terms for the three main groups that you report on: carers (vs. clients, caregivers); health care professionals (vs. health workers vs. clinicians vs. expert advisors vs. health care personnel) and community service providers (vs. community nurses vs. expert advisor vs. counselor).

2. Instead of initials it would be helpful if you could put the participant group for each quote (e.g. carer 1, health care provider 3, community nurse 2) so that the reader can align with the groups.

3. p. 8 please define “GB” in the quote

4. P 14. last paragraph. I think the results certainly raise some concerns that providers may be withholding information, however, it seems that at most this study can generate some hypotheses around this as opposed to saying with any certainty that this is / is not happening.

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I receive research and salary support from the Foundation for Informed Medical Decision Making, an organization that produces decision aids.