Reviewer's report

Title: The role of advisory committees for large studies: an observational study

Version: 1 Date: 16 August 2010

Reviewer: Alison McDonald

Reviewer's report:

Minor Essential Revisions
Title - consider clarifying that the emphasis was on public involvement.

Background - article would benefit from inclusion of other work that has been on Committees (eg DAMOCLES) and also on funders' requirements and recommendations re composition and role of committees (eg MRC's Good Clinical Practice guidance).

Results - Interesting to read that so many recommendations were made in such a short period of time. Was there any duplication of recommendations from the various groups?

Also re the recommendations - there was a substantial number from individual experts (by far the highest proportion). The authors describe the benefit of recommendations being received at an early stage in order not to slow down the research. If these individual experts were included as grant holders or collaborators at the planning stage, would this not substantially reduce the number of recommendations being made after the funding had started?

Results - third paragraph typing error. Capital required at 'The Resources recommendations......

Page 13 - just above Limitations and future research, typing error. In bracketers should state thus producing the data (not thus producing the date).

Conclusions - first paragraph page 17. Typing error. should read Although there may not....... (currently reads Althrough there may not).

Discretionary Revisions
Background - it is not clear the scope, involvement and contribution the three PhD students are making to this observational study.

Discussion - p12. Further detail as to why the LEAP's recommendation to involve carers was initially implemented but was too burdensome to implement (and resultant implications on the goal of the study which was to increase public involvement).

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.