Reviewer’s report

Title: Is Race Medically Relevant? A Qualitative Study of Physicians’ Attitudes about the Role of Race in Treatment Decision-Making.

Version: 1 Date: 18 April 2011

Reviewer: Alexander Green

Reviewer’s report:

The paper was an excellent qualitative study that explored an important and interesting topic – the attitudes of black and white physicians about the role of race in adult chronic disease management. Since there has not been much literature on this topic, this paper becomes particularly relevant. This is particularly true as a qualitative study, which sets the stage for further quantitative studies in the future.

The paper was very well written, clear, and focused. The qualitative methods were solid and well described.

Discretionary Revisions:

While the findings were very interesting, there was an emphasis throughout the paper on comparing black and white physicians. While this is useful and important, it seems somewhat limiting to focus primarily on these differences rather than on the attitudes themselves. To make this point clearer, in the abstract for example, the only results mentioned are that black and white physicians both focused on medical and family history being important as well as weight, and that black physicians felt that race was important while white physicians tended not to. It would be helpful to see in the abstract some mention of the key themes that came up around the ways that race was seen as important (or not). Also, in the results section, it would be helpful to see a list of these key themes.

Major compulsory revisions:

In the limitation section, it would be important also to mention that the study focused on just one case vignette related to chronic disease management – an adult female patient with poorly controlled hypertension, hyperlipidemia, and diabetes. The value assigned to patient race by physicians in this setting may or may not be different in this case than in other types of clinical cases/settings. Also, it is mentioned that focus group studies are limited in sample size, but it should be explicitly stated that statistical methods were not used to compare results between groups, so the findings should only be viewed as hypothesis generating, not as true differences (unless you choose to apply some quantitative statistical methods, which some qualitative studies do). The language throughout the paper should reflect this as well. For example, in the abstract, the authors state that “black physicians were much more likely than white physicians to
consider....” This statement is not valid without statistical methods as it is written. I would recommend softening this claim or simply using the actual numbers – 35 black physicians made statements supporting...and 10 white physicians...). Whichever approach is used should be continue throughout the paper.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**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.