Reviewer's report

Title: A centralised public information resource for randomised trials: a scoping study to explore desirability and feasibility

Version: 1 Date: 2 March 2005

Reviewer: John Sitzia

Reviewer's report:

General

1) This manuscript reports the main findings from a study to explore the views of stakeholders in clinical trials with regards to a national, internet public information resource for clinical trials. This was an original and important study that addressed a topic; lack of public information on trials; that has been raised regularly in the literature over the past 15 years. The qualitative approach was suitable for the research question being asked. The sample size was more than adequate for a scoping study; and the sample displayed reasonable diversity. The findings are highly useful and well presented.

2) In summary, this is a well-written paper reporting an original and valuable piece of research that should be of interest to a broad range of readers, particularly consumers, trialists, and trial funders.

----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

1) Table 1 was missing from the manuscript reviewed

----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

1) METHODS p5: Access to consumers via the National Association for the Relief of Paget’s Relief could helpfully be explained a bit more; Why this association and not others? Did this (apparent) exclusivity introduce bias?

2) SUMMARY OF CONTRIBUTIONS p6: the number of interviewees seems to be 25 (9+6+9+1) and not 24 as stated

----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

1) It is unclear whether the referred to are non-commercial, commercial (and the two are very different in all sorts of ways, not least commercial confidentiality), or both. It would be helpful to be clear about this.

2) Paragraph 3 of the introduction (Although several registers might want to mention a new commitment to openness on the part of drug companies. See, for example, this recent joint statement from the international pharma industry bodies: http://www.efpia.org/4_pos/sci_regu/Clinicaltrials2005.pdf

3) SUMMARY OF CONTRIBUTIONS p7: the use of the term in this context might be misleading; perhaps just say; consumers?
4) First paragraph of discussion: I appreciate that this is an introductory paragraph, but I did feel it might sit better within the Introduction.

5) Discussion, p12. While it is right that the discussion weighs the hypothetical advantages and disadvantages of a trials database, I did feel that it inclined rather without warrant towards the negative. The last sentence of para2, for example, &amp;Increased public awareness &amp; might be said for anything innovative in health services. Moreover, it does not consider that such a demand actually fits well with the current drive towards Patient Choice in the NHS.

6) Figure 1 summarises lots of useful information, but it looks jumbled and complicated. Perhaps it could be redesigned a bit?

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

This paper is based upon a scoping study supported by an award from the Department of Health funded body, INVOLVE. I am currently an INVOLVE committee member. I was not an INVOLVE member at the time of the award and I have had no influence upon this award or this work whatsoever.