Reviewer's report

Title: Uncovering emotion work in clinical trials: a qualitative study of the experiences and views of staff involved in a type 1 diabetes trial

Version: 2
Date: 17 August 2014

Reviewer: anna wolters

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. It is not clear to me what the question is. The topic announced after the literature review is emotional labour/impact, but the fact that this topic uncovered itself during the interviews is in itself not a convincing justification. Its relevance might be enhanced by re-writing the introduction and quickly work towards emotion/randomization and, consequently, a clear research question. The two references [23, 24] seem the most relevant. These re-appear in the Discussion. I think the paper would gain depth if that part of the Discussion (more or less from ‘Like the “emotional labour” uncovered by…’ to ‘…pragmatic and realistic approaches to be developed) were taken as a starting point in the section Background. The present literature review insufficiently delves into the topic. A relevant author on emotion and other aspects of trial work is Jill Fisher, eg her book Medical Research for Hire.

2. ‘Findings’: All its sub-sections show the pattern of a para introducing a topic that is illustrated with a quote, a new topic with a quote etc. But what’s the point? It might help to conclude these separate paras, and to add conclusions to each sub-section.

3. ‘Practical aspects’: How does this sub-section contribute to the analysis of the emotion topic? What is the sub-question? What is the conclusion? I do understand its role in the narrative, although similar content has been described in the literature that was referred to earlier (in Studies of staff experiences) and although the starting quote and the first lines of next sub-section (Emotional aspects) tell the same story.

4. ‘Emotional aspects’: in line with the above comment, the empirics are well described (yet might be more succinct), but the urgency is missing because of lacking links between paras and of lacking conclusions.

5. Since the Findings mainly show that staff experiences a problem, but less what makes the problem relevant, the Discussion and Conclusion as well seem to lack
a bit of depth. The concept of emotion work in nursing and midwifery is taken to
be applicable to the clinical trial situation. I think, however, that there are
important differences that can and should be highlighted in making analytic use
of the Findings. A concept of emotion work in trials (in adapting eg the work of
‘James and others’) would be a most welcome contribution to the growing body
of work on trial co-ordination. You do have the material to work on that.

6.
There seems to be too little distance between the problems experienced by the
interviewees and what the authors do with it. It looks as if the problems and
desires of staff are simply taken over in the recommendations. Little difference
has been made between emotionally challenging issues in every
nursing/midwifery and trial staff stuff. The appeal for a psychologist and one to
one support therefore does not feel as being to the point. As a whole, the
recommendations need more convincing arguments. It is of course possible that
a re-analysis of the material leads to a different conclusion and to different (or no)
recommendations.

7. The topic of emotion work was given attention in earlier trial literature. The title
and abstract make too strong a claim.

Minor Essential Revisions

8. ‘Data coll & analysis’ : What was the role of the other four authors?

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 declare that I have no competing interests