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: 26 August 2014

Reviewer: Jenny L. Donovan

Reviewer's report:

This is a well-written and interesting paper in an important area. It represents a very good use of qualitative research methods, and these are well described, along with a clear presentation of the findings and discussion. The views of recruitment staff have not been much heard in the published literature, and this paper raises important, interesting and original issues that need to be aired and further discussed.

Major compulsory revisions

It would be helpful if the authors:

1. Included the actual topic guide as a figure

2. Included a little more on the strengths and limitations of the study in the discussion. They have acknowledged the single trial, but should also acknowledge the focus of this paper on nurses’ experiences (both as a strength and limitation), the relatively small sample (balanced by with clear and consistent findings), and the reliance on interviews only.

Minor essential revisions

The paper is well written and presented. I could find only one typo: ‘Donovan’ not ‘Donnovan’.

Discretionary revisions

There are several potential revisions that the authors might like to consider:

1. The authors are not quite right that emotion in the context of recruitment to trials has not previously been reported or recognised. This does not negate their paper in any way, including its conclusions, but it would be helpful if their work could be integrated with the other papers and if they could remove the ‘erstwhile unrecognised and unreported’ phrase in the abstract. The paper by Taylor et al (Soc Sci Med 1992; 35: 217-24) was probably the first in the field. Although the authors were unaware, two other papers were also being published as they submitted their manuscript – and both of these raise and discuss the issue of emotion in relation to recruitment to trials: Donovan JL et al, Clear obstacles….. Trials 2014, 15:5, and Donovan JL et al, The intellectual …. Journal of Clinical Epi 2014; 67(8): 912-20. These papers raise similar, but not identical issues in
relation to emotion in recruitment, and so it would be helpful if the authors would consider their findings and particularly identify the complementary and original findings in this submitted paper. Of particular interest in this submitted paper are the emotions arising from the nurses’ roles (complementary) and from the consequences of the delivery of the allocation (original). There are also several other original features in this submitted manuscript that can be identified (e.g. the importance of a continuing clinical relationship after the trial has finished).

[As these are this reviewer’s papers, and it feels somewhat awkward raising this, I leave it to the authors to decide whether to do this.]

2. It would be helpful if the authors reported on the socio-demographic details of those interviewed – age, sex, length of service/experience clinically and in trials, whether they were directly employed by and for the trial – if they have the information available, and whether any of those factors seem to have any influence on responses.

3. The finding of the emotional work required after the receipt of the allocation, and particularly when this led to upset or anger, is particularly interesting and original. In the discussion, it might be worth raising the issue about how fully informed patients were, and how patient preferences were dealt with, particularly as not receiving the pump appeared to cause most distress. There is research by Mills N et al in Trials and JCE about this issue. If the authors have data from patient interviews about this, could this be presented here, or reference made to it if published elsewhere.

4. The terms ‘emotion work’ and ‘emotion labour’ are easily accepted and understood by social scientists. However, they may be less accessible to trialists, and the authors might like to consider whether these concepts could be expressed differently, particularly in the title, abstract and conclusions. It is important that this work is considered further by trialists.

**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 financial competing interests.

I have published papers that are complementary to this submission