Reviewer's report

Title: Towards enhanced clinical care: development of an online information and support resource for adolescent idiopathic scoliosis patients considering surgery

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Reviewer: Joseph O'Brien

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory:
None. The author’s set out to develop online information and support resources for adolescent idiopathic scoliosis patients considering spinal surgery via input from stakeholder focus groups. This particular paper reports on the third focus group which was healthcare professionals. Various methods were employed to achieve their goal of establishing trustworthiness in their qualitative research. The authors are to be commended for taking a very methodical approach in this effort to reach their goals.

Minor Essential:
None

Discretionary Revisions:

1. If the goal of this paper is strictly to build a website for the patients having surgery at the authors’ Institution then I congratulate them and have no further comment on this paper. On the other hand, there is no mention within the paper of any intent to password protect or restrict access in any way. As such, it would appear that the goal extends beyond their Institution and will be viewed by patients worldwide as generally happens with today’s internet.

In such case, there appears to be other limitations of this paper and statements that do not live up to the evidence and rigorous standards of trustworthiness applied towards the focus groups. For example, in the background section the authors state, “Unfortunately, most current online resources emulate the deficiencies of current clinical practice by providing incomplete and inconsistent information and minimal or no venue for social support.” The authors cite a paper by Kortum P, Edwards C, Richards-Kortum R in 2008 in support of this statement which is a general paper about the topic of vaccines, and not specifically referring to online resources addressing the topic of surgery for adolescent idiopathic scoliosis.

The authors make no mention of existing online scoliosis resources, nor take any measures to ascertain whether or not the focus groups’ needs would be met by such resources. A simple google search results in millions of references, including several that are well known reputable information sources, such as the Scoliosis Research Society, the American Academy of Orthopedics, the NIH, Spine Universe etc. Furthermore, there are several other sites such as iscoliosis
and spinekids that are geared specifically for teens and also include the social networking venues the authors refer to. Building another website may help communicate what the authors institution thinks is appropriate as expressed by one of their focus group members, but on the other hand, it is yet another website for a patient to go to which displays potentially contradictory information and more frustration in knowing what to expect or do. The paper would be more meaningful if the existing resources were addressed with appropriate analysis to evidence why spending money and time on another new website resource is warranted.

**Level of interest:** An article of outstanding merit and interest 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'