Reviewer's report

Title: A Pilot Study of the Sharing Risk Information Tool (ShaRIT) for Families with Hereditary Breast and Ovarian Cancer Syndrome

Version: 1 Date: 2 February 2012

Reviewer: Angela Bradbury

Reviewer's report:

This interesting manuscript addresses an intervention to increase sharing of risk information in families undergoing genetic testing for cancer predisposition, which is an important issue in clinical cancer genetics. The rationale for the intervention and background are good. Nonetheless, as currently presented the findings feel overstated given the small sample size and design and limited description of measures. The paper could be rewritten to focus on feasibility alone, which would be more consistent with the size and design. Given the clinical importance of the topic and limited available interventions, a revised manuscript may still be contributory to the field if frames without overstating the findings.

Major compulsory revisions:

1. The sample size and design (historical comparison groups) do not feel sufficient to address aim one of this study as described in the abstract (to describe characteristics associated with increased family communication). Feasibility (aim 2) would be a more reasonable single outcome of interest for this small sample and design. In this case the measures section would need to reflect this refocus and well as the results, discussion and conclusion. It may be possible to describe the outcomes in communication as secondary exploratory outcomes to inform future research and support hypotheses for future investigation.

2. While the intervention is well outlined, it would be helpful to understand how it differs from the control group. Perhaps a table outlining what is similar and what is different would be helpful. As it reads now, several items in the binder could be provided in the control group. For example, do patients in the control group not get a written medical report? A family pedigree? The mutation report? Personalized recommendations for medical management?, etc. Further clarification would strengthen the paper.

3. The measures are poorly described. Pedigree knowledge has been described as a novel construct but further description is needed. Is this knowledge of inheritance or ability to report a family history? If this is a new measure, describing the items or providing a reference would strengthen the paper. Family communication should also be described or referenced.

4. There is very limited description of the items/measures to assess acceptability and feasibility. There is also no description of how the feasibility assessments were analyzed. There is also no information on measures/methods for assessing...
5. While well acknowledged, the difference in time frames in the control group versus intervention group is a significant limitation. The authors provide a nice description of how this limitation can be addressed in future research. This is an additional reason the communication outcomes would be best represented as exploratory and secondary (page 18).

Minor essential revisions:
6. On page 7, it would be helpful to know what number of patients in the “control group” requested the family letter.
7. While the sample size is small, the consideration of individual family structure is a strength. In describing the communication outcomes, highlighting the n for the eligible relatives in the results and figures could help to strengthen the manuscript.

**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'