Reviewer's report

Title: Is No News Good News? Inconclusive genetic test results in BRCA1 and BRCA2 from patients and professionals’ perspectives.

Version: 1 Date: 20 October 2009

Reviewer: Anne Moyer

Reviewer's report:

This is a well-written and clearly organized manuscript describing a unique study that considers the perspectives of women with inconclusive BRCA1/2 testing results and the various types of breast cancer genetic risk professionals drawn from the same clinic. The qualitative methodology is well justified and clearly described and the section on suggestions for improved care is particularly valuable. The authors also do a nice job acknowledging the limitations of the study. The following are suggestions for strengthening the manuscript.

- Major Compulsory Revisions

(1) The manuscript is lacking pertinent citations to recent research (indeed no citations to research published beyond 2007 are included). A quick perusal of the literature reveals recent publications that are relevant to this topic area. For example:

Subjective interpretation of inconclusive BRCA1/2 cancer genetic test results and transmission of information to the relatives.
Cypowyj C, Eisinger F, Huiart L, Sobol H, Morin M, Julian-Reynier C.

Receiving inconclusive genetic test results: an interpretive description of the BRCA1/2 experience.
Maheu C, Thorne S.

Similarly, other relevant but less recent work has been omitted. Some examples include:

Variants of uncertain clinical significance as a result of BRCA1/2 testing: impact of an ambiguous breast cancer risk message.
van Dijk S, van Asperen CJ, Jacobi CE, Vink GR, Tibben A, Breuning MH, Otten W.

Decision making with uncertain information: learning from women in a high risk breast cancer clinic.

Finally, some prior research has considered the perspectives of professionals and may be worthwhile to include:


A more thorough review of the literature will better situate the contributions of the current study and place them in a more completely described context.

- Minor Essential Revisions

The referencing style needs to be adjusted slightly to match that of the journal.

- Discretionary Revisions

A strength of this study is the inclusion of the perspectives of both patients and genetic risk professionals. Currently the results for the two groups are reported on and discussed fairly separately. Discussion that could draw on the insights of having this combination of perspectives would add richness to the conclusions of the study. For instance the authors mention that professionals worry more about the interpretation of inconclusive results than the women did about receiving them. This and other similar differences would be useful to elaborate upon.

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.