Reviewer's report

Title: Using the Heath Belief Model to explore why women decide for or against the removal of their ovaries to reduce their risk of developing cancer

Version: 0 Date: 09 Jul 2018

Reviewer: Melissa Clark

Reviewer's report:

This manuscript describes the findings from a qualitative study of 18 women about deciding for or against having an oophorectomy for cancer risk reduction. It is a timely, well-written manuscript that adds to the relatively limited literature about the difficult decision for women about surgical removal of healthy ovaries to reduce cancer risk. Areas in which the manuscript could be strengthened are listed below:

Background

1. It would be helpful if the authors provide more explanation about why the Health Belief Model (HBM) was chosen over other potential theoretical models such as the Theory of Planned Behavior or others, particularly given the limitations of the HBM including some identified by the authors themselves.

Methods

2. Page, 10, lines 46-53: Who was involved in the data analysis is not clear. Was all the coding only done by one person? The authors say that the conclusions drawn from the data were discussed amongst all members of the research team but how many team members actually reviewed and coded the data?

Results

3. Page 11: Do the authors have any data about reasons for refusal, given the low response rate? How did those who participate compare to those who did not? While qualitative research is not necessarily intended to be generalizable, in this context, understanding who participated versus who did not would provide valuable context to the results and conclusions.

4. Table 1, De Facto should be defined for those unfamiliar with the term.

5. The authors have done a good job providing quotes to support the interpretation of the findings. However, the paragraphs are a bit hard to follow because all of the quotes are generally
at the end of the paragraph rather than directly after a statement is made that is supported by the quote(s). For instance, quotes inserted throughout the paragraph on Page 15 would be easier to follow as below:

Women identified a number of barriers which they felt increased the cost of having the surgery. For instance, several women feared the sudden onset of menopause and relating symptoms. They reflected on the potential intensity of symptoms, how long it would take them to physically, emotionally and mentally adjust to having early menopause and for how many years they may have to cope with menopausal symptoms.

I don't want to be this scarred cranky bitch, dry old woman in the body of a 40-year-old. And not just that, I've then got another 15 years on top of the normal woman who does that [= having menopause]. […] But I just want you to understand that I'm not a 67-year-old woman, I'm a 40-odd-year-old woman, so I've got to think of my long term. I'm fighting this to be here for a longer period of time, but I've got to think about these things so that I can manage in those years ahead. (patient, 47 years)

Some women were concerned about the side-effects of hormone replacement therapy and that having this treatment could increase their risk of getting breast cancer. All women made their treatment decision based on what they thought would be the best long-term option for them.

The risk factors of osteoporosis and that sort of thing that was relevant to me. I thought, oh, well maybe it's better if there's something else that we can do, as opposed to then needing to take hormone replacement and all that sort of stuff, which puts you at higher risk of breast cancer once again anyway. (patient, 34 years)

6. Page 13: Some of the text on this page seems to be better placed in the conclusions rather than results. For example, This highlights that decision making in the context of oophorectomy is very personal.

7. Page 14: The first and second quotes do not seem to support the themes identified in the text regarding perceived benefits.

8. Page 17: The Sentence beginning, "A number of women reported" seems to be a very different than the rest of the paragraph and likely warrants a separate paragraph.
Discussion

9. Depending on results of the proposed analysis comparing participants to non-participants, additional comments in the Discussion regarding limitations/context are warranted.

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Does the work include the necessary controls?**
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?**
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?**
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

Not relevant to this manuscript

**Quality of written English**
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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