Reviewer’s report

Title: Ethics preparedness: facilitating ethics review during outbreaks - recommendations from an expert panel

Version: 1 Date: 24 Mar 2019

Reviewer: Angus Dawson

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for taking my quite robust comments so seriously. I think you have done an exemplary job of revising your paper. I think your overall message is now much clearer. I hope the authors feel the paper has improved.

The focus on practical procedures that can be addressed by ethics committees today, in readiness for future emergencies, is now to the fore. This makes this a far more original and useful paper.

I only a few very minor suggestions as follows:

I suggest that the authors stick with the language of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) within their recommendations rather than also mentioning a framework. You use these terms as if they are interchangeable - but they are not. A framework, at least to my mind, is a confusing term and may be either descriptive (as SOPs should be) or normative (helping people deliberate about substantive ethical issues). I don't think you need to use the word 'framework' and suggest that it is worth removing this to remove this ambiguity (examples where this is used include: p.2 ln.39; p.7 ln.149; p.8 ln.155, 166, 171; p.16 ln.371; table 1, recommendation 1 etc.).

p.5 ln.95. You refer to 'clinical research' - will this include public health research? Consider deleting the word 'clinical' here?

p.7 ln.140. This sentence was unclear. Something like: '…observed that there is much more to be done…'?

p.17 ln.399. You use plan/s as a noun and verb in the same sentence. I'd suggest deleting 'plans for' - to become: '…sample shared plan that outlines the results of the…'.

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

Declaration of competing interests
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?

If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

I declare that I have no competing interests
I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal