Reviewer's report


Version: 0 Date: 03 Apr 2019

Reviewer: Ma'n Zawati

Reviewer's report:

This is a strong and interesting paper overall. It addresses a set of pertinent issues in LMIC biobanking and does a great job of improving our understanding of the public's perception of biorepository research in Egypt. With that said, there are several points throughout the paper in which the authors' meaning is unclear or in which more nuanced discussion could be useful.

Page 5, Line 14: There's an opportunity here to touch on the scope and diversity of different kinds of biobanks and to rein in the reader's expectations about the paper's focus. It may be useful to specify that this research was conducted with a fairly broad conception of 'biobank' and that it didn't focus specifically on only one mode of conducting biobank research. With that said, the authors might want to think about the extent to which the recruitment of patients from a hospital setting might suggest tacitly that the kind of research under discussion is specific to a certain disease or set of conditions.

Page 7, Lines 20-23: The authors might want to give some attention to their chosen definition of 'biobank.' As it's communicated in the paper, the definition that was conveyed to participants doesn't seem exceptionally clear or accessible. I'm worried that participants might not have completely understood the subject in issue based on this statement. Was there a strong reason for using the definition that's expressed in the paper and did participants have an opportunity to ask clarifying questions? In the alternative, it might be that this way of explaining what biobanks are did actually lead to a decent degree of understanding on the part of participants.

Page 10, Table 2: This is a general comment about the way questions are phrased. At the moment, the questions are worded with various forms of 'I think I will donate samples to the biobank…' It sounds like researchers were trying to measure the degree to which participants are planning to participate in biobanking research. I can't imagine that this was the intention. Given the context of the article it sounds like researchers were trying to measure something like the extent to which participants would be comfortable with donating samples to a biobank. I assume that these questions have been translated to English. It would be interesting to know if the subtle connotation in favour of planning rather than comfort is attributable to this.
Page 13, Line 2ff: This section of the paper is a bit unclear. It's hard to know if researchers are describing views about the rights participants should have or do have. Was this set of questions trying to assess what rights biobank donors ought to have? Or were researchers trying to understand how well participants understand what their rights are in practice? As in the comment above, this is a subtle, but important difference.

Page 16, Line 16: The authors say that participants 'did not have any obstacles that could affect their decision' to participate. This overstates what the data supports. At best, the data shows that a majority of study participants were not concerned about the specific potential obstacles presented by the research team. I think the authors can keep this claim but should address the nuance represented in the data.

Page 19, Line 10: The view that participants did not 'think that the samples and data should be used against their will' is unclear. Does this mean that participants expressed the need for researchers to obtain consent for each proposed use of donated samples and data, or does this mean something more general? Consider clarifying.

Page 19, Line 17: The term 'security authorities' should be defined. This could mean a range of things and it's unclear to what the authors are referring.

Page 21, Line 17: The claim that there are 'no cultural or religious barriers against [biobanking]' seems much too strong. Given some of the methodological constraints expressed by the authors, this claim might warrant being dialed back. This claim might also be somewhat more sweeping than one would expect in light of other research in this area. Ma'n Zawati and colleagues ('Barriers and Opportunities in Consent and Access Procedures in Low- and Middle-Income Country Biobanks: Meeting Notes from the BCNet Training and General Assembly,' 2018), for example, found that religious considerations among LMIC biobank managers were a prominent issue. The important role of religion in the cultural practices of a number of LMICs, while potentially not a major barrier, was nevertheless found to be of sufficient interest to warrant careful consideration. On this point, the authors may wish to put their findings in conversation with the literature, in which there is some indication that religion will end up playing a key role in achieving the public trust with respect to biobanking initiatives.
Some aspects of the methodology section would benefit from clarification, particularly with regards to the recruitment of participants. It is mentioned that the questionnaire was pre-tested during a pilot study (line 6-7). However, it is not mentioned who was involved in the pre-testing. I'm assuming the pilot study was done with a similar population than the one under study, but this should be made explicit.

More importantly, the authors mention that patients were recruited at clinical site (lines 12-13), without giving any more background information on the patients who were recruited. Why were they at those clinical sites? Were they recruited before or after meeting with a doctor? Were these patients accompanied? Were they experiencing any symptoms (pain, discomfort, etc.) at the time of the survey? Etc. All of these factors can be sources of bias and it would be important to address them.

The use of the term 'interview' (line 19) is confusing. Given the high number of illiterate 25.5% and lower literacy participants (p.9), I'm assuming the authors relied on a researcher-administered questionnaire as a method of data collection. If that is the case, some information should be provided regarding who administered the questionnaire and what steps have been taken to minimize experimenter effect.
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.