Reviewer’s report

Title: Compensation of subjects for participation in biomedical research in resource – limited settings: a discussion of practices in Malawi

Version: 0 Date: 17 Jan 2019

Reviewer: David Resnik

Reviewer's report:

This paper addresses and important topic, appropriate compensation of research subjects in Malawi, but needs more work.

First, the paper discusses concepts of coercion, undue influence, and exploitation but does not explain them in adequate detail.

There is a difference between coercion and undue influence. Most bioethicists think that offering money is not coercive but it could be unduly influential when participants are poor and the amount is high (relative to them).

Undue influence can occur if money clouds the person's judgment so that they underestimate the risks and overestimate the benefits. Several studies have explored whether this actually occurs. Malawi presents an interesting case because of the widespread poverty.

Exploitation can occur when subjects receive not enough money because they receive an unfair share of the benefits of research. Sponsors and investigators receive most of benefits.

I recommend the authors carefully read the following papers on the topic to enhance their discussion of the issues:


Resnik DB. Bioethical issues in providing financial incentives to research participants. Medicolegal and Bioethics 2015; 5:35-41.


Additionally, the historical background and other extraneous material should be cut. The main focus should be on key issues of undue influence and exploitation as they may arise in Malawi.

**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.

Unable to assess

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

No
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:

Needs some language corrections before being published

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