Author’s response to reviews

Title: Research approvals iceberg: helping it melt away

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Author’s response to reviews:

13/03/2019
Dear Liam and Anita,

Thank you for your review of our manuscript entitled “Research approvals iceberg: helping it melt away” which we submitted as a response to Petrova & Barclays paper “Research approvals iceberg: how a ‘low-key’ study in England needed 89 professionals to approve it and how we can do better”.

We agree with, and have tried to implement all the suggestions that you provided:

Reviewers comment:
“As written, this commentary looks more like a university's/organization's defense of its practice or clarification of the processes rather than a scholarly contribution to help understand the issues. I think the authors' distinction between REC and research governance is an important one, and would be a fruitful discussion.”

Firstly we wish to reiterate that neither author works for the HRA, although we do chair RECs and lead training for HRA REC members on a consultancy basis. We hope this is clear from our conflicting interests section. However, we accept this observation and have tried to ensure the article focusses more clearly on the governance vs ethics distinction.

Reviewers comment:
“I think the details of the of UK system are not as important, to general readers concerned about research ethics. Especially for the point-by-point response to the original authors' recommendations, I didn't see them as necessary or helpful for furthering the discussion. Perhaps one or two of those points are interesting for research ethics or research governance discussion. Others not so much.”

We have deleted our suggestions for the UK system from the abstract and also removed the second paragraph from the “research ethics” section which was focussed explicitly on the UK system. We have also deleted the point-by-point response to the original authors recommendations, but retained the two comments that we think were more widely relevant – although these are now written into a single paragraph.

Reviewers comment:
So, my recommendation is to ask the commentators to revise and submit a much more succinct version,
focusing on the governance vs REC piece.

In addition to the above we also tightened up and shortened the final section of the piece and reduced our alternative suggestions to three points. Overall we believe the document now focusses far more strongly on the governance vs ethics idea, and indeed is now almost a third shorter (2513 vs 3457 words).

We thank you for your time considering our proposed manuscript, and hope we have managed to sufficiently address your constructive comments.

Simon Kolstoe &amp; David Carpenter