Reviewer’s report

**Title:** Missing steps in a stair case: a qualitative study of the perspectives of key stakeholders on the use of adaptive designs in confirmatory trials

**Version:** 3  
**Date:** 5 May 2015

**Reviewer:** Matthew Robert Sydes

**Reviewer’s report:**

Limitations of my review
I am interested in the application of adaptive designs, but I am not a qualitative researcher and I cannot comment on the specifics of the methods used in this review, including the number of interviews and the sampling frame.

**Major comments on manuscript**
None

**Minor comments on manuscript**
There is a lot of ground to cover here and the manuscript is therefore very long. It might benefit from some tightening and focusing, although the formatting from the journal might help in this regard.

Table 1: I would have liked to know whether respondents were thinking more in an early phase setting or in a late phase setting. I suspect the challenges and gain may differ. Do the respondents comments apply equally?

Table 2: I was not certain that I understood this table. What do the column and row labels mean?

Table 3: Not sure how the quotes relate to the thematic areas. Some undefined acronyms.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**
I declare that I have no competing interests