Reviewer’s report

Title: Recruiting patients as partners in health research: A qualitative descriptive study

Version: 0 Date: 22 Jun 2017

Reviewer: Steven Blackburn

Reviewer's report:

Thank for the opportunity to review this interesting article.

Some might argue that there is a common sense approach to recruiting patient research partners and guidance already exists (from INVOLVE and others) which recommend similar methods of recruitment to those highlighted in this article. However this research provides valuable insight into the array of recruitment approaches and describes the advantages, disadvantages, barriers and facilitators to each - knowledge which is less well understood and reported. The article also provides a useful framework for others in the field to consider approaches to recruitment.

The article is well written and structured, and provides a clear account of the qualitative research methods. I therefore recommended publication, subject to a few minor revisions for the authors' consideration:

1. Plain Language Summary - This sections needs to standalone as a clear summary of the whole article. Therefore the following points will improve clarity.

   * Clarify what is meant by 'leads' (line 20).

   * Briefly expand on the 'three ways that could help researchers and patients to find each other' (line 21). As a standalone section, this statement leaves the reader wanted to know 'which three ways' (though I appreciate that these are described in depth in the main body of the article and this may have been intentional?).

   * The fourth recruitment strategy, 'Partnering' (line 26) is a little vague and needs a little more explanation.

   * Three three recruitment models listed as 'traditional, third-party and directory' is a bit vague and needs a little more explanation

2. Clarify who conducted the interviews (line 117).
3. Assuming that the author(s) conducted the interviews, as well as designed the study and analysed the data, it might be useful to state the 'researcher(s) stance' and briefly report, as best as possible, how one's preconceptions, beliefs, values, assumptions and position may have come into play during the research process. The authors have provided a negative case example as a measure of balance but I think some researcher reflexivity might be additionally useful.

4. Regarding the level of investigator agreement in the data analysis, how high is 'very high'? Please clarify.

5. On this issue of 'health system recruitment, it might be useful to reflect on the power balance between clinicians recruiting their patients in a clinical setting for patient involvement, as described by Locock et al, The power of symbolic capital in patient and public involvement in health research. Health Expect. doi:10.1111/hex.12519

6. I found the statement 'not applicable' to the consent to participate (line 421) a little strange given that this was a interview study and you are wishing to publishing the data.

I hope these suggestions are useful for improving what is already a good article.

**Level of interest**
Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

- An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English**
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

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