

Reviewer's report

Title: Is No News Good News? Inconclusive genetic test results in BRCA1 and BRCA2 from patients and professionals' perspectives.

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Reviewer: Encarna Gomez Garcia

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This paper summarizes the experience of: a) 13 women with breast cancer (BC) and a few first degree healthy relatives, as well as b) a team of medical experts, to an inconclusive DNA-test result about BRCA1 and BRCA2 mutation detection. The paper reports a selection of answers to a number of open questions from each of the persons interviewed dealing with coping with uncertainty (group a) or communicating a result which does not provide more certainty about cancer risks than before the test was performed.

It is interesting to read the opinions of all persons involved and provides a good image of the variety of reactions.

Major comments:

I miss in the paper a clear definition about what the authors call "inconclusive". The definition provided in the abstract: " a result where no mutation was found" is not clear enough. Do the authors mean: a) the DNA result was wild-type b) there was a genetic variant of uncertain clinical significance (UV) or c) both a and b. This is also important because the information about the deleterious effect of an UV can change with time (neutral variant or mutation).

Secondly do the counselors talk about the possibility of an UV when offering DNA-testing? This does not appear in the paper. If not, this can be introduced as one of the "Suggestions for improved care" from the Discussion.

Minor suggestions:

The paper could be shortened, since some items are said twice or are obvious and need not to be mentioned. Examples are:

p.5: third paragraph: "women from HBOC families and the health care professionals who care for them" can be: women from HBOC families and their health care professionals.

Further this paragraph fits better under Methodology than in the Introduction.

p.7: Includes both a description of which relatives have participated, as well as a table with their fictive names. The table does not provide any additional useful information.

p.19-20: "All the women were middle class and white and were recruited from one cancer centre". The ethnicity and social level was not been mentioned in the Methods. Further, the authors do not elaborate why do they think this is a

limitation.

p.22: Conclusion: The sentence beginning with "Although testing has improved greatly in the UK, there remains approximately a third of women....This sentence does not refer to their own results and does not belong in Conclusions.

Typographic errors:

p.6: line 18: "were similar in that the both.." should be: were similar in that they both..

p.16; line 10: "developed at test.." should be: developed a test

p.23: Reference 5: "oopherectomy" should be: oophorectomy

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.