**Title: A Qualitative Study of IEC Member’s Understanding of Research Guidelines, Privacy, and Challenges to Privacy Protection**

**Authors: N N Mishra, Triptish Bhatia, Vishwajit L Nimgaonkar, Smita N Deshpande, Lisa S Parker**

**Review Comments**

**Reviewer 1**

Please see detailed comments inserted in text of the manuscript (attached).

**Reviewer 2**

1. The authors have, in the methodology section clearly described a study that is qualitative – and the analytical methodology is in keeping with that. However, in the reporting of results, they have resorted to numerically describing the findings. An example from the section on Awareness, understanding, and implementation of ethical guidelines is: “While a third of those interviewed were not familiar with any international research guidelines, just over half were conversant with international guidelines and said that they referred to these to evaluate research protocols”  
   This needs to be carefully revised in keeping with the tone and tenor of the earlier paragraph in the same section.
2. The methodology section needs further elaboration in terms of the following: “Analysis proceeds through a series of sequential steps (Rubin & Rubin, 2011): repeated close reading of transcribed interviews, followed by coding of interview data and verification of inter-investigator reliability in coding. In this case, the final step involved normative analysis of the themes or concerns identified.” In this case, the authors need to state which of them undertook the primary coding and who undertook the alternative coding and how reconciliation over the mis matches, if any, were made.
3. Secondly, the authors need to explain the process from which themes were folded into normative analysis needs be made explicit. Was this restrained by available material? Were these predetermined and efforts made to look for them through the ongoing iterative process of interviews? This is not clear from the description of methodology.
4. The conclusion section does not match the normative analysis and moves to the Supreme court decision – it also alludes to clinical ethics committees and its requirements, a concept that was not alluded to in any findings and was not the focus of the inquiry at all. To draw parallels from research ethics reviews to practitioner ethics is a bit erroneous. The conclusions can be restricted to the findings from the normative analysis and its implications for research ethics committees and not clinical ethics committees.