Srinivasan Public communication of CHIM:

**Rev Comments:**

Reviewer 1

The paper is crisp and very well written. I have some suggestions:

1. It would be good to have a section on “ethical journalism” in health. There are some excellent health correspondents. But i have also suffered at the hands of some people why try to create sensation. If you remember the altruism piece that sanjai and i wrote together, the health correspondent of ToI wrote a over-dramatized headline for the piece and made it sound like medical students are monsters. Such instances can also portray the whole medical research enterprise in bad light.
2. It would be good to have a section on use of media for recruitment of study participants in health research – the pros and cons of that.
3. A section on social media, rapid spread of rumours through social media, its impact on health research, vaccine trust etc. can inform the role of social media on CHIM communication.
4. I am also wondering if CHIM is different in any way from regular health research and whether media communication on CHIM should be any different? Some insights into this would be helpful. In the context of overall struggle to effectively engage with media about all health research, where does communication about CHIM feature?

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Reviewer 2:

1. *The paper focuses on an important aspect of public communication of health research and one that involves an ethical angle.*  
  
2*. It is topical and discussed within the context of India. It speaks to both the research community and media practitioners who cover health. It fits well into the Journal’s scope.*   
  
3. *While the substance of the critique is not new, it does relate to an issue that requires discussion and preparation in terms of public communication. There are no concerns in relation to plagiarism.*  
  
  
4. *The author could refer to some of the existing critiques of the journalism-science divide and perhaps provide a stronger, more contextually based justification for preparedness on both sides of the divide. The lessons from immunization are many, and a more pointed case for building understanding among media without blunting their critical edge could be made. The public mistrust of clinical trials and research involving human subjects was also significantly eroded following the HPV trials scandal, and this could be referred to.*  
  
  
5. *A few other comments have been made in the body of the paper.  
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Reviewer 3:

1. The paper does address issues relevant to the fields of bioethics and medical ethics in the developing countries, largely from the perspective of the Indian media.

2.  It gives an original perspective of issues that would be considered by media in India – doesn’t seek to outline an original argument or perspective.

3.  It rather assumes its conclusions (e.g. be honest, transparent etc) rather than argues for them – but it is not really an argumentative piece, and they are hardly revolutionary and will be widely shared.

4. I thought the comment about Nazis and Tuskegee at the bottom of p.3. are unhelpful. Will many Indians really think of these cases? Even if they do, and I doubt it, are they actually helpful here? If you need to have non-Indian research ethics examples they should be true parallels. Tuskegee was an observation study of the natural progression of disease with no intervention (despite one being available – at least part way through the study – e.g. penicillin). This is not a true parallel to CHIM. And the Nazi experiments are certainly nothing like CHIM. A better analogy would be the Willowbrook Hepatitis studies (but note that with CHIM although the infection is deliberate – it is the vaccine/drug that is being tested – it is not just an observation study to see how disease spreads). The focus is the individual infected – not dynamics of an epidemic. It would be useful to explore these issues of similarity and difference in a nuanced way.

5. I was surprised there was no mention of national or international research ethics guidelines. It is interesting that the recently revised ICMR guidelines offer little assistance in thinking about research in this area.

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