Reviewer's report

Title: To use or not to use a condom: A prospective cohort study comparing contraceptive practices among HIV-infected and HIV-negative youth in Uganda

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Reviewer: Audrey Pettifor

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Review for BMC PH
Major compulsory revisions

The background section, while containing important and pertinent information needs better structure. Currently it is all one large paragraph with many topic sentences and key ideas/concepts. This should be broken down into a couple of key paragraphs with key topic sentences that lead in and set the ground for the story this data is going to tell. I think the information is there it just needs to be more clearly structured.

Overall the paper needs a lot of work on better structure, English Language needs editing for grammar and readability.

Methods: Please clarify how change over time in contraceptive use/uptake was determined? Were only youth who were not using contraception at baseline considered and then did you look at uptake at 6 months and compare to baseline and then compare 6 to 12 months or did you compare 12 months to baseline? Given you have repeated measures and longitudinal data it seems more advanced longitudinal methods could be used and increase power to detect an effect (GEE perhaps?) From looking at Table 2 and 3 it seems like you are not using the 6 month data which seems like a waste of data when that could be informative to your analysis?

Results: Contraceptive behavior: the data presented needs greater structure. Again, a lot of different figures are provided, it is rather confusing what is being described and the story that is being told. Please work on structuring the data so that it is better ordered and easier to follow.

Minor Essential Revisions
In the section data management and analysis it says “The outcomes of interest were desire for children, condom use and contraceptive use.” While under the section titled “participant recruitment” it says “The main outcomes of the study were modern contraceptive use (both uptake and discontinuation of contraception), pregnancy, and condom use.” Please rectify between the two sections. In addition, the section titled participant recruitment contains info on sample size and measures.. so not sure the title is appropriate for the whole section
Background: “The majority of one fifth (1.2 billion)...” please re-word..the phrasing is awkward

Background: “...gender vulnerability and disparity in sexual practices.” It is not clear that the disparity in HIV prevalence between young men and women is due to differences in sexual practices per se? If there is please cite data..on the whole, young men report ‘riskier’ behavior than young women in this age group (ie, more sex partners, earlier coital debut)

Background: “Only 5% of sexually active young people aged 15 to 19 years and 18% aged 20 to 24 year old used contraceptive methods, leading to very high rates (40%) of unintended and often unwanted pregnancies among the adolescents” Please add a citation for this data

Methods: The information on questionnaire design should be a separate paragraph from the sample size calculation paragraph

Methods, participant recruitment, please clarify if these eligibility criteria are for positive or negative youth ‘Young people, who knew their HIV status for at least six months before recruitment date; were resident with a radius of 30km of the clinic, and not intending to relocate residence within two years were eligible for the study.”

Why did you exclude HIV positive youth from NTIC?

Figure 2- what does the x axis represent? If it is percentage why does the scale go to 120? Please label the axes. The label says this is contraceptive behavior at baseline and 12 months but I do not see baseline or 12 months indicated in the data..rather it seems a difference between HIV positive and negative participants? Please clarify. The text also says this Table is a sub-sample? Who is the sub-sample, please clarify.

Table 2, please clarify, so in the column labeled contraceptive use at baseline, this is the percentage of youth reporting using contraception at baseline stratified by various co-variates (the rows)..For the column heading then “discontinued use at 12 months”.. This is then of those who were using contraception at baseline..that is the denominator? And for the uptake columns, the denominator was those not using contraception at baseline? Please clarify in the text or methods. What are the p-values for? Differences at baseline between co-variates in that variable (ie, difference in baseline use by age) or are you showing changes between baseline and 12 months?

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

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published
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