Reviewer's report

**Title:** Adolescents' level of knowledge and awareness of HIV/AIDS: a risk factor for an up-coming epidemic? Findings from a population-based study in Karachi, Pakistan

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 4 December 2008

**Reviewer:** Olive O Shisana

**Reviewer's report:**

The study that led to this paper is well conducted and well presented. The article may be relevant for Pakistan where HIV prevalence is low and most people still need to be made aware of the epidemic. However, outside of Pakistan, the subject has been well studied and most scientists have gone beyond knowledge, particularly that knowledge on its own is not sufficient to change behaviour. The statement on page 15 lines 9 and 10 that “we believe limited knowledge about the spread or prevention of HIV/AIDS will have an effect on health behaviour” needs to be amended to recognise that the path from knowledge to behaviour change is complex, often moderated by a number of variables. The authors could benefit from reviewing and referencing articles on knowledge, attitudes, practice and behaviour conducted in the 1990’s.

Moreover, the measures of knowledge seem to be limited, even though I would agree with the open-ended form of asking the question. It shows that knowledge is limited.

The authors missed the opportunity to use the gender lens in framing the problem of differential access to knowledge, though in the discussion they return to this. A theoretical explanation of why gender is crucial in accessing knowledge on HIV would strengthen the paper.

The authors may want to refer to the 17 to 21 year olds as adults rather than girls and boys. It is often practice in the literature on HIV for persons aged 15 to 49 to be considered adults, even though there are some who are still teenagers.

On page 7 the 4th and 5th line present two categories that are compared but are not mutually exclusive. That needs to be corrected.

I suggest that the paper be revised and resubmitted for publication.

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.
Declaration of competing interests:

I declare I have no competing interests