Reviewer’s report

Title: Lack of knowledge about sexually transmitted infections among women in rural Vietnam

Version: 2 Date: 9 March 2009

Reviewer: Van Pham

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Major Compulsory Revisions:

1. The title and the aim of the study are about to investigate knowledge about STIs among women in rural Vietnam. The authors need to be more specific in why they chose FilaBavi as the study site, and how the selected women in that district represented women aged 15 – 49 years in rural Vietnam. Otherwise, I would think the study results could be generalized for women aged 15-49 years in North rural Vietnam only, not for women in rural areas in the South and middle of the country. The title of the manuscript as well as the titles of the tables should be changed accordingly.

2. Table 3: It looks like the authors included the group of 445 unmarried women who were not asked about their induced abortion, into the group of married women who answered No to the question for their analysis. This needs to be corrected.

3. Table 4 as described in the text showing the impact of related factors on each aspect of STI knowledge of the study women was missing. The table needs to be included, and its interpretation in the results part needs to be more specific.

Minor Essential Revisions:

4. In the ethics section, the authors need to address if participation was voluntary, and if any incentive was given to the participants. They need to be more specific about the consent, such as participant can withdraw at any time without any adverse consequences. I am concerned about the 100% response rate, and would want to know which factors contributed to the absolute response rate.

5. Typos in Ethics section: should be “confidentiality” instead of “confidence”

6. The second paragraph in study site and population section could move to the data collection part. It should also include the number of times that a surveyor needed to come back if a participant was not home. Could there be more than one woman aged 15-49 years in each household being selected for the study? If so, how they were treated in the analysis?

7. “Cluster” unit need to be defined. Is a cluster a commune or a hamlet or…?

8. Table 1 and 2 display and compare the results of the two groups: married and unmarried. For those (if there were) who were separated, divorced, or widowed, were they included in the married or unmarried group for the analysis? There
should be a note about it.

9. Table 1 notes that questions of induced abortion, and adverse pregnancy outcomes were not asked in the unmarried group because of the sensitiveness. However, I don’t see the instruction for skip pattern with those questions in the questionnaire. I also wonder if other sensitive questions regarding to self-reported STI-related symptoms (pain during intercourse, bleeding after sexual intercourse…) or question of “have you had any children” were asked or not asked in unmarried women. These relate to how the authors treated this “missing” information in table 3 as stated above.

10. The title of the table 1 should include childbearing experience.

11. There should be reference to support the authors’ argument in the discussion part: “The difference could be mainly due to high mass media focus in Vietnam on HIV/AIDS prevention. This may put people at increased risk because of poor concern for STI”. I also don’t see the findings support: “Lack of awareness of STI consequences among our respondents may have led delayed treatment”

Discretionary Revisions:

12. Table 1 noted that the economic status was based on household’s wealth index. Was the index extracted from the household of the same participant from the larger project mentioned in the study site and population section?

13. It was explained in the text and in the note of the table 2 that the word “causes” were based on the respondents’ own words. How could it be if a surveyor read the question and its answer choices, and participant just chose her answers?


Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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.