Reviewer's report

Title: comparing the accuracies of brief versus longer depression screening instruments that have been validated in low and middle income countries; a systematic review.

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Reviewer: Andrea Norcini Pala

Reviewer's report:

The subject of the paper is a very important namely the diagnosis of depression in low and middle income countries and HIV contexts. The aim was to conduct a meta-analysis to verify whether the use of extremely brief, short, and longer instruments are actually all able to discriminate between individuals who are not depressed from those who are depressed. This aim is very interesting and I carefully read the manuscript. The procedure adopted is adequate, and the data analysis is correct. I would suggest publishing this manuscript for the relevance of its conclusions. In fact, clinicians who work in HIV contexts may use a brief instrument such as PHQ-9 in order to have an initial screening of mood disorder. However, I would suggest the authors to modify certain aspect, please note that these are personal suggestions. To this reviewer, reading the paper, it was not very clear the importance given to diagnosis of depression among HIV positive individuals. I suggest to the authors to better clarify whether they are interested in depression diagnosis among HIV positive persons and HIV cure contexts or they refer to HIV context as part of general medicine context. To me, I personally see this paper as potentially focused only on HIV contexts in low and middle income countries. However, it should be more strongly stressed out, I suggest revising the title too.

Although it may be not the focus of the paper, the great work of the authors might offer further interesting information, namely, the percentage of diagnosis of depression is somehow associated with a specific questionnaire? There is a difference of depression diagnosis percentage among different culture and countries? A more psychometric information, the extremely brief and the brief questionnaire have different items, which items have been excluded? could this information provide insight on relevant symptoms? Lastly, I would suggest a careful revision of the paper in order to correct typo.

In conclusion, with very few revisions I certainly suggest to publish the paper for its relevance.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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'