Reviewer's report

Title: Partner Notification for sexually transmitted infections in developing countries: a systematic review

Version: 2 Date: 19 November 2009

Reviewer: Michael Sweat

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BMC

“Partner Notification for Sexually Transmitted Infections in Developing Countries: A Systematic Review”

Lead Author: Nazul Alam

Discretionary Revisions

1. There are formatting errors in Table 1 for the Klisch reference.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. It was suggested that the authors reference the 2001 systematic review in Cochrane on STD Partner Notification by Mathews (see: http://www.cochrane.org/reviews/en/ab002843.html). The title is “Strategies for partner notification for sexually transmitted diseases”. This seems an important reference given the topic. The authors responded that they did not want to include an “In Press” paper as a reference. I mistakenly referred to it as “in Press”. This is a published review. It is online, as all Cochrane reviews are, but it published. I cannot imagine that the authors would not want to reference this analysis.

2. Various typographical errors have been corrected.

Major Compulsory Revisions

(1) Framing of the research question – This reviewer is satisfied with the revised write up with regard to how the questions are framed.

(2) Identifying relevant work – the revision on comments in this regard is adequate.

(3) Assessing the quality of the studies – Revision in response to the description of how quality assessment was utilized is adequate.

(4) Summarizing the evidence – the authors revision improves on the tendency to not summarize across studies. They have been less responsive to the critique of vote counting. However, given that this is not a meta-analysis I do believe that
there is greater tolerance for vote counting techniques. There is a well developed literature on this issue, (See Cooper and Hedges, and guidelines from the Cochrane Collaboration, and the Campbell Collaboration for more). The response to this critique was that they have “identified five research questions a priori”. The fact that there are five outcomes does not in any way mitigate the risk of introducing bias through vote counting techniques, which were done within each of the 5 research questions. I do believe that the authors need to explicitly state this as a study limitation.

(5) Other items mentioned in this section were adequately addressed.

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests