Reviewer's report

Title: Correlates of STI-testing among vocational school students in the Netherlands

Version: 2 Date: 24 September 2010

Reviewer: Rebecca Swenson

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Peer Review for BMC Public Health, Revision of “Correlates of STI-testing among vocational school students in the Netherlands”

This revised manuscript is much improved. I feel that the authors have adequately addressed my major concerns regarding the previous version of the manuscript. The addition of background information concerning the ethnic composition and differential STI risk for youth of various ethnicities strengthens the Introduction. The rationale for the inclusion of past testing behaviors in the model is presented more clearly, as well. In addition, the descriptions of Intervention Mapping and the Precede-Procede Model have been clarified. Authors have also included a figure of the Integrative Model, as requested. The suggested modifications to the Methods, Results, and Discussion sections and authors’ accompanying explanations are also adequate. Minor revisions are suggested below.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. In Abstract, remove “Low educated” from the third sentence.

2. Page 4, Paragraph 2: The addition of the 3rd and 4th sentences are important, however, the wording of the 3rd sentence can be improved. In addition, we can’t assume that Antillean and Surinamese adolescents have a higher prevalence of STIs because of engagement in risk behavior alone. It may be that immigrant and/or migrant youth have less knowledge about STI symptoms, testing, and treatment due to lower health literacy, face ethnic discrimination in healthcare settings that decreases the likelihood of health-seeking behavior, or lack finances or transportation that would enable them to seek routine healthcare that would lead to early identification and treatment of STIs. Also, “disassortive” is spelled incorrectly. I would suggest rephrasing these sentences as something like:

   a. “However, the presence of disassortive mixing between high risk immigrant adolescents and their Dutch peers increases the likelihood of STI transmission between high and low prevalence groups.”

3. In the 4th sentence, replace “among” with “of,” remove the word “were,” and add “ethnic” before group.

4. Page 5, Paragraph 1: You may consider adding a brief explanation as to why early sexual debuts and more unsafe sex lead to higher risk for STIs, such as “…they tend to have earlier sexual debuts and engage in more unsafe sex
practices than Dutch-born adolescents, leading to more opportunities for STI exposure." Additionally, the reasons for ethnic health disparities stated in Point 2 above may also apply here.

5. Page 5, Paragraph 2: Don’t start a sentence with “And.” Instead, add a comma and attach to the first sentence. You may also rephrase as “…no interventions have specifically targeted vocation students.”


7. Page 6, Paragraph 1: Consider rephrasing as: “Of the few studies that have employed a theoretical framework, some have used a stage model to assess readiness for STI-testing, some have used the Health Belief Model, and others have studied single psychological constructs such as… (continued)”

8. Page 7, Paragraph 1: Change “past behavior have” to “past behavior has”.

9. Page 7, Paragraph 2: Change “the management” to “school administrators.”

10. Page 17, Paragraph 2: This paragraph discusses lack of expected significant findings and potential limitations. Its current placement as the 2nd paragraph in the Discussion distracts from the studies’ main findings. I would discuss significant findings first, and move this to the limitation section on Page 20 or following the 2nd paragraph on Page 19.

11. Page 18, Paragraph 3: The first sentence of this paragraph is in contrast to the last sentence. Is there a gender difference that promotes the higher rates of testing among girls? For example, authors could discuss girls more frequent contact with healthcare providers for sexual healthcare including routine pelvic exams, which typically start in adolescent around the onset of sexual initiation.

12. Page 19, Paragraph 2: The line starting with “For example” is a sentence fragment.

13. Page 19, Paragraph 2: Authors state that the role of parents and friends should be addressed in order to establish positive social norms. Could they briefly discuss ideas for incorporating social norms or parents/friends into an STI-testing promotion program?

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.