Reviewer's report

Title: The Intersection Between Sex and Drugs: A Cross-Sectional Study of HIV Prevalence and Social Consequences among the Sexual Partners of Injection Drug Users in Chennai, India

Version: 1 Date: 14 September 2010

Reviewer: JiangHong Li

Reviewer's report:

Overall, this is a simple yet clear descriptive study. The main weakness is weak Background section.

Major compulsory revision:

1. The Background section can be strengthen by highlighting the need to understand HIV, HBV, HCV prevalence among wives of India/Chennai IDUs, as well as their risk behavior and risk factors. The discussion has some interesting points about risk behavior, implication to future epidemic and disease control strategies, but no related introduction up front. The current arguments for this paper need to be better organized to be strong and clear. For example, authors seems imply that prevalence data of this population is lacking by ONLY mentioning their own teams’ prior study results without giving more general background. The size of the target population and its implication to HIV epidemic and intervention efforts in the nation is insufficiently highlighted. Related to this comment, the Abstract Background section could be improved with more general background beyond the team’s prior study.

2. This reviewer is a little uncomfortable with the statement that “ … making them [IDUs] an important bridge population” without sufficient support and that “Transmission is likely further exacerbated by…. particularly those with only one partner.” If majority of the wives are married monogamous with only one sex partner, the epidemic is less likely to spread quickly to the rest of general populations, therefore the use of “important bridge” sounds stretching, and I can’t picture what this fact could “exacerbate” transmission?

3. The Abstract “Background” section need something broader than the team’s prior study. The Abstract “Methods” should point out that the sample is wives of prior study IDUs. The readers need to know that this sample was recruited years after the prior IDU sample. Otherwise, it is confusing to see that 13% were widowed.

Minor Essential Revisions:

1. Each table title should have enough information describing the sample (e.g. Sample size, population from which the sample was drawn, location).

2. Find a way to keep figure titles and the figure together.

3. Needs proof reading to clarify some language problems
Discretionary Revisions:

1. What's the point of the last sentence of the second paragraph? Sympathetic about wives of risk because they are “innocent”? or trying to point out an area that could be ignored by some public health professionals or researchers?

2. In the middle of the second paragraph under “Study population”, how were IDUs encouraged to bring their wives? Did and how staff address IDUs’ fear?

3. In the 3rd paragraph of the same section, how the 400 were “pre-determined”? The first 400 staff able to contact? Or random selection of IDUs?

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.