Reviewer's report

Title: 'Pregnancy comes accidentally - like it did with me': Reproductive Decisions among Women on ART and their Partners in Rural Uganda: A Qualitative Study

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Reviewer: Diane Cooper

Reviewer's report:

Overall comment

The issue of pregnancy in the context of HIV and especially ARV treatment is recognised as important internationally and is particularly critical in high HIV prevalence settings such as Uganda and other sub-Saharan African countries, where the highest HIV infection rates are among women and men of reproductive age and where more and more people living with HIV are going on to ARV treatment. This is an interesting article able to generate new insights from Uganda and is timely. However some of the literature review and data analysis is a bit thin at times and needs to be revised for it to be published. It would also be useful to know what the status of legal abortion is in Uganda, very briefly - given that the results were that some aborted and whether this was spontaneous or sought because of HIV status if the authors have any data on this in the results and discussion.

The language in the paper is clearly and well written and the manuscript adheres to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition.

Specific comments:

Title and abstract

The title accurately conveys what the study, its findings and its discussion/conclusion. I like the title ‘pregnancy comes accidentally’ as this is very common in women and men’s experience.

Introduction

The background section covers most of the relevant literature in sub-Saharan Africa. However there are some further articles that could be included and also some comparisons in this area in the developed countries’ literature and South America could also be included either here or in the discussion. See suggestions below:

Methods

- Can the authors explain the significance to this study of the clients being randomized to three different monitoring strategies and explain briefly what this
was about.

Results

In terms of the results there are a number of comments/suggestions I would like to make:

1. In paragraph 1 on page 6, final paragraph: It is the only time the authors use % for the themes (it is appropriate to use this in the sample characteristics). There is some controversy over whether this is appropriate in qualitative research. I prefer not to, but rather to talk in terms of numbers or many or few as the authors do in the remaining results. This is because it is meaningless to give percentages for qualitative themes as the sample is not randomly selected and large enough to be generalizable as is the case in quantitative research. Therefore is it one percent more or less it is meaningless. This does not mean qualitative research is less valid, it is merely aimed at achieving different goals of depth rather than breadth. However, I will leave it to the authors to choose because different reviewers may have differing views on this.

2. More Quotations: I realize that the authors have a problem of word limit but it would be worth giving a few more quotations to illustrate themes emerging as this is how the data is shown in qualitative research. Even if they are truncated quotations. For e.g. the following themes: financial dependence of women (did financial issues emerge at all for men in a different way? The need to sustain a family etc?). The tables depicting the family planning issues for e.g are one way to do this and a very nice. It would be worth in the discussion commenting on some of these issues more (see below)

3. Given that this is an article about people living with HIV on ARV’s did being on ARVs not come up as an issue as it has in other studies (e.g Myer et al, Kaida et al – who found it did not have an effect; Cooper et al 2009 and in developed countries)? Was this not probed with respondents?

4. The authors mention that for the most part there weren’t gender differences – this is also somewhat surprising. For e.g. did men not men finances at all; what other issues? Could they tease this out a bit more.

5. Did issues of leaving children as orphans that have arisen in other studies not emerge at all? Was this not asked about?

Discussion

The authors should discuss some issues analytically in more detail. For e.g.

1. Given that according to Table 1 such a high percentage of respondents had lost a child this should be commented on more as a potential issue either driving fertility intentions or militating against them.

2. The authors should refer to other studies that either support or are different to their findings more: e.g. Pregnancy being associated with a younger age (Cooper et al, 2009); knowledge of PMTCT; financial issues; the complexity of
decision-making etc.

3. More data should be presented in the form of quotations on the participants concerns on a link between pregnancy, having children and deterioration in health status as this is a similar finding militating against childbearing in other studies.

4. Page 12, paragraph: Can the authors give the readers an idea of what participants were counselled about by health care providers, as providers discouraging pregnancy is an issue that has come up in numerous other studies.

5. Limitation. As this was a qualitative study, it could not determine the strength of the motivations for pregnancy. This is not because it was cross-sectional.

6. Page 13, paragraph 3: the authors made good points about counselling etc. and this could be linked more to presenting some results on this in the results section.

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.