Reviewers report

Title: "When there is health there is life" - Sexual desire trajectories of people on ART: Implications for HIV prevention

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Reviewer: Venkatesan Chakrapani

Reviewers report:

A. Discretionary Revisions (which are recommendations for improvement but which the author can choose to ignore)

1. Authors can choose to consistently use either the term ‘antiretroviral therapy’ or ‘antiretroviral treatment’.

2. Authors can be more concise wherever possible. For example, by cutting down non-essential portions of long quotes.

B. Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

1. Change ‘HIV-infected’ in the first paragraph of the Methods section (and elsewhere) to ‘people living with HIV’ or ‘HIV-positive/HIV-seropositive’

C. Major Compulsory Revisions (which the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

1. Title:
   • Trajectory literally means ‘curved path’. However, because the desires and sexual behaviors of people living with HIV change in complex manners (not necessarily a linear/curved path), it might be better to change this term to reflect that point. (Also, the use of this term in the main text of the manuscript needs to be reviewed and changed, if that term does not convey the intended meaning).
   • Because it is the sexual risk behavior and not sexual desires that pose risk of infections, ‘…Sexual desire trajectories…’ can be changed, for example, to “Changes in sexual desires and behaviors of people living with HIV after initiation of ART: Implications for HIV prevention and health promotion”. Including the term ‘health promotion’ may indicate that by addressing sexual desires and behaviors of people living with HIV we not only focus on preventing transmission to others but also to protect the health of people living with HIV.
   • Expand ‘ART’.

2. Abstract:
First paragraph:
It is possible that after HIV diagnosis, some proportion of PLHIV may be sexually active. Thus, it may be incorrect to say “As people on …ART regain health, they are likely to resume sexual activity….” Also, it is unclear whether the authors meant resumption of sexual activity after the HIV diagnosis or after PLHIV have fallen sick?

Methods paragraph:
It might be better to provide the sample size by gender and indicate their current marital status. Being a longitudinal study, the years of data collection and data collection period during each year need to be mentioned.

Results paragraph:
Again, the term ‘resumption’ is used. If none of the participants at the baseline reported having had sex after their HIV diagnosis (or within a particular past timeperiod), then that can be mentioned.

Conclusions paragraph:
I could not find any direct evidence for the need to include ‘prevention of mother-to-child[-transmission]’ in the conclusions paragraph, even though it is definitely important, in general.

3. Background section:
Second paragraph
The second sentence: “As ART … understand the effects on the sexual desires of users as this has implications for the spread of the epidemic”. This may sound judgmental to some. It might be better to reword that sentence as sexual desires themselves do not have direct implications for the ‘spread’ of the epidemic but unprotected sex does. And the authors can mention “…for the spread or control of the HIV epidemic’. It is important to acknowledge that sexual desires of PLHIV are quite natural and part of their sexual rights, and should not be pathologised by thinking only in terms of the spread of HIV to others. The phrasing of the sentences needs to be changed accordingly.

4. Methods section:
‘Procedure for sampling’:
Because CD4 count categories ‘high’ and ‘low’ were supposed to be used for “comparing the adherence levels of the 2 immunologically different groups”, using that categories in the quotes may not be necessary, especially when there is no explicit comparison of the two immunological groups in terms of the differences or similarities in relation to the changes in sexual desires and behaviors.

5. Results and Discussion sections:
Even though each of the quotes states from which service the person was using (health facility or home), there seems to be no comparisons of how the findings
differed or not between these two groups (health facility service users and home arm) and what are the reasons for the same, and what implications can be drawn.

How the interventions for the two groups (health facility user and home arm) were different? Because those interventions might have had some effect on the attitude of participants toward their sexual desires and sexual practices.

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