Title: HIV Risk, Associations of HIV Infection, and Bisexual Practices among men who have sex with men in Peri-Urban Cape Town, South Africa

Version: 1 Date: 21 January 2011

Reviewer: Susan Buchbinder

Reviewer's report:

This is a well-written manuscript that explores the risk practices and HIV prevalence among a cross-sectional sample of 200 MSM recruited from townships near Cape Town, South Africa. Over the past several years, several reports have documented the high HIV prevalence among MSM in sub-Saharan Africa, and risk factors associated with prevalent infection. This study is unique in exploring these issues among peri-Cape Town townships.

Major comments:

1. The investigators conducted HIV-1/2 testing using the OraQuick rapid antibody test on oral specimens; no results were provided to the participants because no confirmatory test was conducted. This raises some concerns, as this population may have limited access to testing. Were other mechanisms for testing offered to study participants? If you were not confident enough of the results to share them with participants, how confident are you in using them as the primary outcome for many of your analyses?

2. The introduction and discussion could be reworked to set up the major questions in the introduction (without detailed description of published data), and then integrating previous results in interpreting results from this sample. The authors could also make a stronger case for why this particular sample is important to study, as results from several other samples of MSM in Africa have been reported. Do the authors think these results differ from other published data, and if so, how?

Minor revisions:

1. A number of the references are not appropriately formatted.

2. The sentence at the top of page 11 beginning "This trend was more pronounced..." is unclear and could be reworded.

3. In the second paragraph on page 13, there is a statement that a potential explanation for difference in HIV prevalence between Black and Coloured townships may be knowledge of unprotected anal sex as a risk factor. Were these data presented? If not and they were collected, these data should be included in results. If they weren't collected, they either shouldn't be in the discussion or it should be made clear that this is just speculation. Similarly, there is a discussion of male circumcision -- were these data collected?
4. Several other variables should be added to Table 4 including Black vs. Coloured townships, finding partner on the internet, and type of lubricant.

3. The results could be shortened and tightened by highlighting only the most important results from tables, but not repeating all of the results. It would also read more clearly to have results in the text and tables be presented in the same order.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**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.