Reviewer’s report

Title: Patterns of Condom use and associated factors among HIV positive clients in North Western Ethiopia: A comparative cross sectional study

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Reviewer: Emilie HENRY

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BMC review
Patterns of condom use and associated factors among HIV positive clients in North Western Ethiopia: A comparative cross sectional study
2nd lecture

Background

MAJOR COMPULSORY REVISIONS

Reference should be clearly made to the recent available data on “treatment is prevention”. Data from observation as well as mathematical models and results from RCTs have shown that the potential of ART to reduce the risk of transmission (Montaner et al., 2010)(Cohen et al., 2011)(Granich, Gilks, Dye, De Cock, & Williams, 2009). The reference used by authors (Vittinghoff et al., 1999) to support the idea that “an increasing number of sexual transmissions of HIV may stem from those who know they are infected and engage in unprotected sex” is dated. Contrary to this idea, studies have shown that an important part of new infections are due to high viral load during primary infection in people ignoring their HIV status and lack of access to treatment.

The authors support the idea that “promoting consistent condom use among HIV positive patients is crucial to reduce the spread of the pandemic”. One more time, this is not taking in consideration recent available data. Moreover, the authors’ statement are also potentially stigmatizing for people living with HIV.

The authors explained that “it is important to understand patterns of condom use and associated factors among HIV positive person so that behavioral interventions can be designed”. Based on the recent data, behavioral interventions are not the unique and more efficient strategy. Condom focused behavioral interventions have already shown limitations, especially when targeting heterosexual married or stable couples in Africa. Thus, the data could also be used to advocate for new (ie earlier) treatment recommendations at the national level for example.

The national (Ethiopia) and local context (Felege Hiwot?) should be describe (HIV prevalence and incidence data, main routes of transmission, access to prevention, testing and care, cost issues, particularities of the local context of interest, etc). This would be particularly relevant because many references are
made to the influence of the context in the discussion section.

Methods

MINOR ESSENTIAL REVISIONS
The methods section is very detailed compared to the other sections of the article. Some cuts could be proposed.

The authors make reference to a questionnaire: Was this study conducted as a sub-study of a bigger study? What were the questionnaires items about?

Discussion

MINOR ESSENTIAL REVISIONS
I wasn’t able to find out the first result discussed (the magnitude of inconsistent condom use among ART experienced and ART naïve groups) in the previous section. The results section should be modified in consequence.

The data on pattern of condom use presented in the results section should be discussed (common reason reported by respondents for their use of condom inconsistently). These results are of high importance in order to design tailored interventions. In the article, we could regret that issues related to quality of life of people living with HIV (including sexuality) are never discussed. The article would gain not only focusing on public health strategy to reduce new infections but also considering quality of life issues for people living with HIV.

This is a general comment on this section: authors are underlying their main results and propose comparison with results of other studies but are not really interpreting and discussion results. For example, saying that “respondents who cannot read and write were more likely to use condom inconsistently than those who had secondary and tertiary education”: How could we explain this? How this information can be useful for designing interventions? The discussion section should be modified to take this comment in consideration.

From my point of view, one important limitation is missing. Indeed, the use of condom has not been documented according to the type of sexual partner (spouse, stable partner, occasional). A greater understanding of condom use would suppose to have this information.

One more time, authors should success to link the discussion of their results to the recent data on treatment is prevention (largely discussed at the IAS conference in Roma, July 2011).

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References


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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.