Author's response to reviews

Title: Effectiveness of a peer-led HIV prevention intervention in secondary schools in Rwanda: results from a non-randomized controlled trial

Authors:

Kristien Michielsen (Kristien.Michielsen@ugent.be)
Roxanne Beauclair (Roxanne.beauclair@gmail.com)
Wim Delva (Wim.Delva@ugent.be)
Ronan Van Rossem (Ronan.VanRossem@ugent.be)
Marleen Temmerman (Marleen.Temmerman@ugent.be)

Version: 3 Date: 1 August 2012

Author's response to reviews: see over
From: Kristien Michielsen  
International Centre for Reproductive Health, Ghent University, Belgium  
E-mail: kristien.michielsen@ugent.be

To: BioMed Central Editorial Office

Subject: Resubmission of manuscript “Limited effectiveness of a peer-led HIV prevention intervention in secondary schools in Rwanda: results from a non-randomized controlled trial” (Manuscript reference number: 1435799946697974)

1 August 2012

Dear Editor,

We have received the final comment concerning our manuscript “Limited effectiveness of a peer-led HIV prevention intervention in secondary schools in Rwanda: results from a non-randomized controlled trial” (Manuscript reference number: 1435799946697974). We have addressed this comment and have amended our manuscript accordingly.

We would like to thank the reviewers for sharing their knowledge and experience, and the editors for facilitating a smooth review process.

Yours faithfully,

Kristien Michielsen
Reviewer #2

The authors have provided comprehensive answers to the many questions I raised. Thank you very much!

However I would like them to include a statement and supporting references within the manuscript about why they decided to go ahead with the study without parental consent. This is always a thorny issue and whilst I agree that young people can be considered competent to be involved in social science research there are other ways in which to obtain consent such as holding community forums to discuss with adults the research being undertaken and to get their general permission to proceed, or from other guardians of the young people such as those running the boarding houses. I therefore feel that you must state clearly that you did not obtain parental consent and why.

If this issue is addressed I agree that the manuscript can be published.

We have amended the manuscript to include this remark. It now reads as follows:

“Before the start of the survey, the students gave written informed consent after concepts of voluntary participation and confidentiality were explained to them. School principals signed an informed consent agreeing that their school would be used as a study site and that students would be requested to complete questionnaires. Parental consent was waived in the ethical review process, based on two arguments. First, practical considerations: parents live far from the schools and visit rarely, no full address details or phone numbers were available, and illiteracy is high. Second, we argued for a developmental approach to adolescence and adulthood and stressed the importance of collecting data directly from adolescents. Based on several guidelines [1-3] and scientific literature [4-6] we argued that adolescents have the cognitive capacity to take decision concerning participation in social and human science research.”