Reviewer's report

Title: What constitutes the best sex for gay and bisexual men? Implications for HIV prevention

Version: 1 Date: 12 August 2013

Reviewer: Martin Holt

Reviewer's report:

This is a welcome addition to the field and a timely reminder that HIV prevention programmes primarily based on risk factor research often miss what is important to gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (MSM). The EMIS survey was an extraordinary research undertaking and it is welcome to see additional analyses emerging from the research collaboration.

Minor essential revisions

1. In the methods section, please indicate the typical length (in words) of the 12,942 responses that were coded. I suggest you provide the mean length in words of the responses and the range. This is to help readers assess the quality (and variability) of the data that were analysed.

2. In the results section, please comment (in the text) on the finding that HIV status was associated with wanting sex to be free from harm and overcoming psychological and social barriers. This suggests a) that 'harm' may have been interpreted as including HIV by HIV-negative and untested men and b) that HIV-positive men experienced more fears associated with negotiating sex.

3. In the discussion, please offer some additional interpretation of the age-related patterns in your findings. In particular, please comment whether you believe the greater interest of younger men in relationships and older men in sexual repertoire is an indicator of long standing age-related patterns (i.e. younger men have 'always' been more interested in relationships), changing generational values (i.e. older men who became sexually active during gay liberation are more focused on sexual expression, younger men are more integrated with their heterosexual peers), a mixture of both or some other factors. Do these age/generational patterns pose any challenges for those engaged in HIV prevention e.g. in developing suitably diverse programmes for gay, bisexual and other MSM? A reference to Jeffrey Weeks' The World We Have Won or similar analyses of changing sexual mores would be appropriate.

Minor points

4. The numbering of the citations is messed up from very early in the manuscript i.e. the citation numbers don't match the intended references in the reference list. Please correct.
5. In the results, please rephrase the sentence 'Almost two thirds (62.1%) of responses were coded and included in either 'Relationship formulation' or 'emotional and sexual connection', of which 15.6% were included in both.' I think you mean that 15.6% of ALL responses were coded as including both 'Relationship formulation' and 'emotional and sexual connection', not that 15.6% of 62.1% (only 9.6% overall) were coded as such.

**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.