Author's response to reviews

Title: Predictors of loss to follow-up before HIV treatment initiation in Northwest Ethiopia: a case control study

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Jimmar Dizon,

Re: Manuscript ID. 1152243169852714- Predictors of loss to follow-up before HIV treatment initiation in Northwest Ethiopia: a case control study

Please find attached the second revised version of our manuscript “Predictors of loss to follow-up before HIV treatment initiation in Northwest Ethiopia”, which we would like to resubmit for publication as a journal in Public Health section of BioMed Central.

The reviewer’s comments were highly insightful and enabled us to greatly improve the quality of our manuscript further. In the following pages are our point-by-point responses to each of the comments of the reviewer. Furthermore, we have made some editorial changes in the manuscript.

All revisions in the manuscript are in bold and underlined for ease of review. We hope that the revisions in the manuscript and our accompanying responses will be sufficient to make our manuscript suitable for publication in BioMed Central. We have submitted both the cleaned and edited version of the manuscript.

We shall look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

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Responses to the comments of Reviewer #1: Bakhao Ndiaye

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reviewer’s Comment</th>
<th>Authors’ Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comment 1:</strong> The page numbers referenced in the responses of the author were not accurate; this made very difficult my review. Efforts should be made in the future for better correspondence.</td>
<td>Apology for the problem created. Now we have referenced the page numbers accurately.</td>
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<td><strong>Comment 2:</strong> If I understand the response of the author, the patients who only showed up for a single visit were included in the analysis. It would be preferable to estimate the frequency of these patients.</td>
<td>Yes, LTFU patients who only showed up for a single visit were included in the analysis. We have already tried to illustrate the frequency of this scenario on page 12. i.e. among the 363 pre-ART LTFU patients, 84.8% (n=308) of LTFU patients failed to return since their first clinic visit.</td>
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<td><strong>Comment 3:</strong> On page 9, under section data analysis, the author says “patients who only showed-up for a single visit (failed to return since their first visit) were categorized under less than one month follow-up time”. This means that these patients are no longer LTFU? In addition, rather than putting explanations in brackets, the author should make clear sentences including all the pertinent information.</td>
<td>Basically these were LTFU patients who had only a single visit to the HIV clinic that was during the time of enrollment to pre-ART care. When we analyze patients' length of follow-up time in pre-ART care, these patients were grouped in to less than one month follow-up time. According to the suggestion, now we have revised the sentence to make it clearer. Please note that, we have moved these sentences to the ‘measurement’ section (page 8) based on the author's guideline.</td>
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<td><strong>Comment 4:</strong> The definition of LTFU is unclear, long and confusing. It would be better to add a diagram as illustration.</td>
<td>According to the suggestion, we have revised the definition of “LTFU” and “in care” to make them understandable and concise (page 7 &amp; 8).</td>
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<td><strong>Comment 5:</strong> I still consider that interactions between variables should be verified for more credibility of results.</td>
<td>Based on the recommendation, we have checked for interaction between variables using the logistic regression after creating the interaction terms but none of the</td>
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interactions showed statistically significant association with the outcome of interest with the p-values ≥0.094. We have illustrated this analysis in the methods section on page 9.

**Comment 6:** Table 3 results should be presented as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>n total</th>
<th>n (%)</th>
<th>OR</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
<th>n total</th>
<th>n (%)</th>
<th>OR</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

We have edited table 3 based on the recommendation. Please note that, since there is no change in the total ‘n’ and percentage, we have not included it for the adjusted OR section of the table (page 24 & 25).