Reviewer's report

Title: Informing the Development of an Online Self-Management Program for Men Living with HIV: A Needs Assessment

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Reviewer: Allison Webel

Reviewer's report:

This is a well-written and interesting paper that presents novel data on an important topic. However, I'm not sure the title represents the study as presented.

Major Revisions:

Page 4 line 6, who has raised concern about this issue? I would expect this claim to be justified with a citation. Also, I'm not clear on what the author’s mean by “implementation of programs”, please clarify.

In general I was surprised by limited literature cited in the qualitative results and discussion sections. I know some qualitative traditions advocate for this, but it helps to reader to understand the novelty of the findings, and how the findings fit into overall body of research. Many reading this paper will not be HIV self-management experts and if they only read this paper, they would miss a whole literature on HIV self-management that is directly related to this study. (also, take a look at the literature on post-traumatic growth following and HIV diagnosis- others have looked at this issue before)

Discussion: It seems the purpose is really to develop an online SM program focusing on the psychosocial needs of gay men living with HIV. Not additional SM needs. If correct, please clarify.

Also, I'd like to ask the authors to be clearer in what they mean by support. This word is used throughout the discussion and is very imprecise. Is there anything in their data that can help us clarify what type of support is needed? Specifically, what have we learned about these needs from this study?

Also, could the authors talk about how the qualitative findings complemented the quantitative findings from the SF12. As it is written, these really appear to be separate data from separate studies and there is little synthesis provided. This would help the reader to understand these findings, and their implications, in greater detail.

Minor Revisions

I strongly suggest that the author’s look at Dallas Swedenman’s model of integrated HIV self-management. I think it would help to inform the background paragraph on page 3, lines 21-24. It is also more recent than Lorig’s work.
Page 5, line 8: while I understand what the author's mean by “positive men”, I'm not sure an audience member who is not an HIV expert would understand. I recommend changing to HIV-positive or man living with HIV.

Style: the authors identify ART as cART in the background and ART in the results. Please be consistent so as to not confuse the reader.

Focus groups: that all participants identified as gay or MSM may bias the results. I'd like to see the authors discuss this limitation (and its implications).

Isolation and stigma, page 13- we wrote a paper last year that looked at this issue in men and women that might help provide context for this result and provide further justification for the conclusion. (Webel, 2014, AIDS Care(26) 5 http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09540121.2013.845288#.U-uU4Gs3Zc

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests’