Reviewer's report

Title: HIV Behavioural Interventions Targeted Towards Older Adults: a Systematic Review

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Reviewer: Stanley Luchters

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The topic described in the paper is of importance and requires further attention from the international community. The problem of HIV among mature adults aged 50 years and above is of great (increasing) importance to both developed and developing country settings. The manuscript clearly highlights the paucity in available data from HIV behavioural interventions among older people.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The title suggests a systematic review of HIV behavioural interventions. However, it is not clear from the manuscript what is meant with the “HIV behavioural interventions” nor how this is measured. The method section states: “the inclusion criterion of the review was the search for non-farmacologic, non-biological, behavioural and cognitive interventions. We excluded studies that evaluated treatment efficacy among older adults and included those that focused on interventions in the areas of prevention, adherence, testing, care and support.” These interventions and outcomes need to be defined more clearly.

2. What are the outcomes of interest? At times there is reference to "adherence, HIV testing, risk behaviour, HIV knowledge" but not clearly communicated.

3. The search strategy is not clearly stated and could not be replicated based on the description.

4. Some of the literature defines older people as “mature adults” which was not included as part of the definition. Also the term “ageing” could potentially have increased the sensitivity.

5. Methods: The review needs a framework to clarify what HIV behavioural interventions are being included and what these interventions aim to establish (what outcomes are of interest). The manuscript should discuss the results based on that framework to guide the readers.

6. Results: The second paragraph provides an overview of the articles that were not included in the review. These could be described in the discussion section, but are not a result from the review.

7. Results: It is not clear why there is no more mention of the earlier identified outcomes of risk behavior, testing uptake, adherence etc.

8. Table 1: Include the references to all the included studies in the table. Importantly, some of these reviewed studies are not in the references e.g. Heckman et al 2006.
9. Table 1: Country should be consistently communicated
10. Table 1: Orel et al: sample size is not clear (89 people aged 60 and older; N=11); What is the country of the study?; What year was the study?; What is the duration between assessments?; Clarify the proportion increases in knowledge.
11. Table 1: Altschuler et al: participants unclear with respect to the pilot testing. Should these be included? Also, the intervention, measures and results are unclear. Is one measure the uptake of services?
12. Table 1: Rose et al: What is the duration between pre- and post surveys?
13. Table 1: Heading of the second section should read: "AMONG HIV-POSITIVE OLDER ADULTS"
14. Table 1: Lovejoy et al. It is not clear how many participants in each arm. Results state: "Controls had on average 3.24 times as many...." But compared to who? What about those with 1 session?
15. Table 1: Illa et al: Outcomes not clearly reported (4% to 3% with control).
16. Table 1: Heckman et al 2011: Some of the important findings are missing: Also IPSG reported fewer depressive symptoms compared to control; There was no difference between FFCI and IPSG.
17. Table 1: Souza et al 2008: It is not clear why CD4 count would be an outcome of interest. Were there only 8 participants (11-3 excluded)?
18. Table 1: Souza et al 2011: It is reported that N=11 but also N=21.

Minor Essential Revisions
1. It would be good to more explicitly state where information described relates to information from developed countries.
2. Abstract: the result section does not provide any results on the reviewed interventions.
3. Abstract: What can be concluded based on the review of the 12 studies?
4. Abstract: Results section describes twelve articles, but is not clear how many studies / interventions this refers to.
5. Abstract: The results section of the abstract should describe the HIV behavioural interventions and the outcomes measured (adherence, HIV testing uptake, increased HIV knowledge, etc). Also clarify what is meant by "adherence": is this ART adherence?
6. The background describes interesting characteristics of older people with respect to HIV testing uptake as well as their perceived risk of HIV. Both statements have references from the mid-nineties and I would expect more recent data being available, particularly as the authors state that much of the literature "...describes behaviours of older adults rather than evaluate an intervention."
7. Background: The seventh paragraph aims to describe the available information on HIV prevention, testing, adherence and other social and
behavioural areas. It would benefit the readers if this is more systematically described for each of the areas of interest.

8. Background: The seventh paragraph: The last sentence of that paragraph describes a study by Orel et al but is not clear what the “publications” are and what their purpose was.

9. Results: First sentence does not describe the fact that 2 studies were added at a later stage.

Discretionary Revisions

1. Abstract: It states: Twelve articles were identified of which all….Please rephrase.

2. Throughout the manuscript the terms randomized controlled trials are sometimes described as randomized control trials. Please report consistently.

3. background: the sentence:"Articles have highlighted the HIV and ageing phenomenon...." This sentence could move up one sentence in order for the flow of information to improve. Also, state here that this also recognized in sub Saharan Africa where the majority of HIV infections occur.

4. Background: Fourth paragraph describes sexual risk behaviours as …one-sixth as likely to use condoms during sex and one-fifth as likely to have been tested......”. Could this be rephrased as six times less likely and five times less likely?

5. Background: fifth paragraph, second line: “considers” should be “consider”

6. When reference is made to a published manuscript please acknowledge the first and subsequent authors: e.g. Rose et al.

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**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