Reviewer's report

Title: Towards an Understanding of Barriers to Condom use in Rural Benin using the Health Belief Model: A cross sectional survey.

Version: 1 Date: 13 August 2004

Reviewer: Philippe Van de Perre

Reviewer's report:

General

Although numerous “Knowledge, Attitude and Practice” (KAP) surveys have been reported so far, this is an interesting and original report dealing with identification of barriers to condom use in rural West Africa. It is a well-written, concise and clear report that deserves however some amendments.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

1. For the readers who are not familiar with the health belief model, this theoretical model should be described in the method section.
2. The study objective is to identify factors associated with, if not determinants of, absence of condom use. Since it is not designed to measure a change in condom use, I do not understand the sample size calculation based on an ability to detect a difference of 10% in condom use.
3. Out of 251 participants, 16 (6%) returned a questionnaire considered as uncomplete. These questionnaires were removed from the analyses. In order to validate the identification of some factors associated with no condom use (and statistical associations), it should be interesting to consider two extreme scenarios, by hypothesing the 16 non responders to have all responded in opposite directions.
4. How were the initial 270 individuals selected? Consecutive random encounters in the 10 villages? Or in health settings?
5. Important discrepancies may exist between declarations and practices. How were descriptions of practices and perceptions validated or ascertained? Inconsistency in declarations and its impact on study conclusions should be discussed extensively.
6. The central question of this study that should be discussed in depth is how KAP studies may impact on prevention programmes or be used as tools to measure sexual behaviour changes.
7. Were the two referenced studies (ref 17 and 18) conducted in Kenya and Ghana using the HBM? If yes, the present study should not be claimed as being the first to use the HBM (first sentence of the discussion section). Or is it the first to be launched in Benin?

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Some typos should be corrected, such as:

1. Add “times” after “...there were 1.9...”, page 5, second paragraph, second line.
2. Delete “of” in the sentence “... were more aware than males”, page 5, third paragraph, line 4.
3. Change “cues” for “clues”, page 9 second paragraph, line 5.
Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
None