Author's response to reviews

Title: Assessing effects of a media campaign on HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention in Nigeria: results from the VISION project

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Author's response to reviews:

March 30, 2006

The Editor
BMC Public Health

Re: Manuscript ID 1438657617884574

Dear Sir or Madam,

Attached is a second revision of the manuscript entitled 'Assessing effects of a media campaign on HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention in Nigeria: results from the VISION project'. This work represents original research and has not been submitted for publication elsewhere. All authors have participated in the drafting, editing, and revision of this manuscript, and approved the final version.

This work illustrates the importance of mass media communication for disseminating public health information, and has broad applicability for others involved in the design of public health programs that use mass media interventions. This article should be published in BMC Public Health to illustrate the importance and utility of public health program evaluation for assessing behavior change, as well as to reinforce the importance of targeting specific populations within a community. Given the magnitude of the current HIV/AIDS pandemic, it is imperative that public health programmers and scientists have access to the most current information on effective field interventions for impacting HIV/AIDS. BMC Public Health is an excellent forum for communicating this information.

Following this letter is a point-by-point response to the reviewers' comments. We look forward to a final decision and appreciate any consideration given to this manuscript.

Regards,

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Title: Assessing effects of a media campaign on HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention in Nigeria: results from the VISION Project evaluation

Reviewer 2: Lalit Dandona
Response to comments:

1. The reviewer queried if comparisons with a baseline survey could be done for key indicators. We have added a paragraph in the Results section, which compares 2002 and 2004 data for the three outcome indicators used in this analysis: chi-square statistics have also been added to illustrate if/where significance differences exist in the overall trends. Further, we have converted figure 2 into 3 separate figures (Figures 2-4), to illustrate the differences between 2002 baseline data and 2004 follow-up data for the 3 outcome indicators, respectively. The figures now represent each indicator separately, with both the 2002 and 2004 values included for ease of comparison.

We have also added a paragraph into the discussion section to briefly discuss the trends, albeit small, in the outcome indicators between 2002 and 2004.

2. Methods and Results

a. No comment needed

b. No comment needed

c. The reviewer requested further clarification about the definition of exposure measures used in the analyses. The paragraph in question now reads: "Our indicators of program exposure included a total count of the number of FP/RH radio programs heard, television programs seen, or printed FP/RH advertisements seen over the past 6 months (0 - 10). A separate count of the number of radio programs exposed to (0 - 7), and the number of TV programs exposed to (0 - 2), were also used as indicators of program exposure in separate models. All values, whether part of the cumulative number of programs exposed to or the individual programs exposed to for the respective media types, were then categorized as low (none), medium (one), or high (2 or more). The decision to use the same categories for each program exposure model was based on the distribution of program exposure data for each media type. These analyses showed that the proportion of respondents exposed to each category (i.e. low, medium, high) of program exposure was similar between total program exposure counts, radio program exposure counts only, and TV program exposure counts only. No model was run for the printed advertisement media, as the questionnaire only asked about exposure to any printed advertisement (yes/no).

   We have also added a sentence into the data analysis section to further clarify how our program exposure variables were estimated and categorized after the Poisson regression. The sentence (about half way down in paragraph) reads: "Because estimated exposure is a continuous variable, respondents were recoded has having low estimated exposure if the estimated exposure was less than 1, medium if estimated exposure was between 1 and 2, and high if estimated exposure was two or more, and used as indicators of program effectiveness in all logistic regressions."

d. No comment needed

e. The reviewer requested that the description given for the estimates be added as a footnote to Table 3: this has been done.

f. No comment needed

g. The reviewer requested that we add an explanation of the "estimated high" and "estimated medium" as a footnote in tables 4-6: this has been done. Also, the reference category, "estimated low exposure", has been added to the tables.

3. We have revised the discussion to emphasize the limitations of the study under one paragraph only. The second to last paragraph in the discussion now reads: "As with any data collection and evaluation exercise, there exists limitations in both the data and study design that may distort the true effect of the program on the outcomes investigated. The VISION program was designed as a full-coverage program; as such, it was not possible to evaluate the effect of the program in relation to an equivalent comparison group. That is, we were unable to find a control group that would not be exposed to the intervention; because many of the partner NGOs were also active outside of the VISION project areas, contamination of the control areas was unavoidable. Hence, we decided on the use of a post-test design, and statistical techniques, to control for the potential limiting effects of extraneous variables in the analysis. That being said, in the absence of additional evidence, readers should be cautious when trying to generalize these results to other, and possibly dissimilar, areas."
Minor Essential Revisions

1. No comment needed

2. Abstract has been corrected according to the reviewer comments, with confidence intervals inserted into the Results section and the general concluding statement removed; Conclusion section of the abstract has been revised to focus on results of this analysis only.