Author's response to reviews

Title: Gender distribution of adult patients on highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART) in Southern Africa: a systematic review.

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Gender distribution of adult patients on highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART) in Southern Africa: a systematic review.

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Dear Editor,

We are please to re-submit a revision to the manuscript referenced above. Please find below the responses to the editorial queries raised in the most recent review of the manuscript.

Responses to Lalit Dandona’s comments

1. The reviewer had suggested that we clearly indicate that double counting of patients was possible in the review.
Response: We have specifically reported this in last sentence of the Methods section and within the Discussion. Our intention was to answer the question: What was the gender distribution of patients in treatment programs when data were reported? So even when studies were conducted at same site, but separated in time, both results were of interest to us. We believe that a gender pattern obtained at a site this year and confirmed a year later only confirms that the pattern is stable.

2. There were no summarization of results within the text.
Response: We have since done this. The spaces within the text where tables were are indicated to be, have been sandwiched by some summarization of the findings. We have made reference to Table 1 and 2 within the main body of manuscript now.

3. Table 2 could report female to male ratios of patients on treatment.
Response: We appreciate this comment. We have since included ratio of females to males on treatment.

4. The sequence of studies reported in Table 2 should follow some order.
Response: We have made the changes such that the table presents countries in Alphabetical order. We have also grouped studies within countries based on whether studies were from a paying program or not paying.

5. That for Tanzania (reference 32 in Table 2), no actual number were presented.
Response: The report included the findings as we have presented in the table. We do recognize the limitation and this fact is presented in the discussion section.

6. Some references did not have all authors listed
Response: This has been corrected and all references have all authors listed, except reference [34] which had , et al in the source abstract.

7. English and grammar
Response: we have had the manuscript re-revised with attention to grammar and language.
Comments by Lisa Hirschhorn

1. The reviewer had suggested that not enough justification for the study had been presented in the manuscript.
Response: We have presented the justification in the Introduction section of the manuscript. Specifically we have referenced Natrass (reference, 1) and Theobald [9] who both have suggested that treatment programs may benefit the stronger in society while only limited access to the vulnerable groups. We have also suggested that women are vulnerable in southern Africa and access to care may be limited. It is with this in mind that a study aimed to assess the gender distribution of patients on highly active antiretroviral therapy is justified.

2. The reviewer queried how we handled overlap of patients’ populations.
Response: We have indicated in the manuscript that overlap was possible. But our intention was to answer the question: What is the gender distribution of patients receiving HAART from the program at the time data were reported? Multiple reports from the same site were treated as multiple cross sectional findings that in a sense providing different ‘snap shots’ at different times.

3. Results sparse and findings no comparisons of ratios made.
Response: We have highlighted key findings from the Tables in the main text now. At the spaces where we have indicated as sites for the tables, these sites are now sandwiched by summarizations of the findings.

4. Authors do not draw own conclusions based on the data.
Response: We have enhanced the discussion, and conclusion sections. The results section has also been beefed up to highlight key findings.

4. Language concerns
Response: We have had language reviewed to correct the errors that were incorporated in the earlier drafts.

Editors comments
Formatting issues
Response: We have formatted manuscript in accordance with journal guidelines. Specifically,
1. We have reported all author names except reference [34]

Thank you.

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