Reviewer's report


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Reviewer: Valeriane Leroy

Reviewer's report:

1. Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined?

The objective of studying knowledge and attitudes is mentioned in the abstract section but is not clear enough and it should be stated in the introduction section. My suggestion would as follows: this study is aimed at study knowledge and attitudes of pregnant women about HIV/AIDS in Semey, Kazakhstan in 2007.

In the background section, it would be important to remind what is currently known about the level of HIV prevalence in the population and its socio-demographics characteristics. There is imprecision in the introduction section: elective C-section is indeed recommended in developed countries in women with high viral load around the time of delivery and in developed countries where the health care level is good. But this could be not the case in the Kazakhstan context and this needs to be adapted to the specific local context.

The quality of reference cited should be improved:

The ref 2 could be replace by the following one: De Cock, K., M. Fowler, et al. (2000). "Prevention of Mother-to-Child HIV Transmission in Resource-Poor Countries. Translating Research Into Policy and Practice." JAMA 283: 1175-82. In this paper, it is clearly stated that Breastfeeding transmission is responsible of about 20 to 50% cases of overall MTCT cases.


2. Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replicate the work?

Methods to select the sites and the study sample of pregnant women are unclear. What is the representativeness of the four sites selected compared to the rest of unselected sites? How were selected the 226 women in the study: consecutive sample, randomly selected?

Please the content of the questionnaire into more details: quantitative then qualitative interview: type variables collected. How were conducted the interview with helping of the interviewer or anonymously?
It would have been nice to describe the groups of transmission of this population?

There is no need to precise the 95% Confidence interval formula if the reference is stated but these confidence interval is more meaningful to precise the characteristics of the population. There is no need to state all 95% CIs after each percentages: the question could be either a description (% or mean or median) or a comparison with another variables.

To study the statistical relationship between variables, it could be more appropriate to use test: chi-square or t-test according the type of data collected. This should be corrected here.

I would suggest revising method and result sections of this ms with an epidemiologist.

3. Are the data sound and well controlled?

Organisation should be synthetic mentioning what variables are distributed differently over the different groups of women: is there a statistical association between women occupation and her ethnic origin? Is there an association between her education and her ethnic origin? Occupation classes look bizarre: what is clerical occupation for pregnant women? The last paragraph of the results section p4 is difficult to understand? What is a good socio-economic status compared to fair in this context? Only 1% are poor? What this represent compared to the general population? It seems highly selected.

It seems that breastfeeding transmission is different from mother-to-child transmission (MTCT) is one mode of HIV transmission that can occur through three different timing: in utero, during delivery or postnatally through breast-milk transmission.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?

Tables needs to be revised: their current presentation is inappropriate: title should mention persons, place and period of time of the study.

Blank answers should be dealt as lack of knowledge in this context: this classification will change lot of trends when there are many blank answers.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?

The discussion section should not repeat the results section: all results should be in the results section. There is lot of redundancies. The discussion should raise the representativeness of the sample compared to the general population. The modality of data collection should also be discussed. To me â##the idea of being ready to accept a c-section while being HIV-positiveâ## is a misconception message that should not be induced in such a context (p13) this needs to be discussed but I am not sure that this was not induce by study questions. The take home message of this paper is there are lots of lacks of knowledge or
misconceptions in this population about the way of HIV transmission. The last paragraph of the conclusion should be in the introduction section.

6. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found? The abstract should be revised being more informative: the methods used for sample selection should be detailed as well as the variables collected. As in the results section of the ms the presentation of the results is confusing: it seems that breastfeeding transmission is different from mother-to-child transmission (MTCT) is one mode of HIV transmission that can occur through three different timing: in utero, during delivery or postnatally through breast-milk transmission. Conclusion of the abstract needs revision stating public health implications. The title could be modified as follows: knowledge and attitudes regarding HIV/AIDS among pregnant women in Semey, Kazakhstan, 2007.

7. Is the writing acceptable? Needs editing

Please make your review as constructive and detailed as possible in your comments so that authors have the opportunity to overcome any serious deficiencies that you find and please also divide your comments into the following categories:

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

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

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

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests'