Reviewer's report

Title: Survey of the knowledge, attitude and practice of Nigerian surgery trainees to HIV-infected persons and AIDS patients

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Reviewer: Dr Gerardo Maupome

Level of interest: A paper of limited interest

Advice on publication: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the compulsory revisions

Review of Manuscript: "The Knowledge, Attitude and Practice of Nigerian Surgery Trainees to HIV-infected persons and AIDS patients."

This is a report of a cross-sectional survey of novice physicians training to become surgeons in Nigeria. The description of these trainees and their opinions with regard to the risks posed by offering surgical services in a population with very high HIV seroprevalence make this report an important piece that ought to be published. The article, if revised as noted below, will enhance our understanding of HIV infection and its treatment in settings rarely reported in the literature.

I have substantial concerns about the design of the study and the way it is presented. Furthermore, I recommend that the document be considered for publication only after re-submission as a Brief Communication. The compulsory revisions need in a new version are:

1. The manuscript can easily be reduced to 50% of its current size without suffering much loss of detail. For example, substantial duplication of information exists in the introduction; the discussion digresses is several parts.
2. Some of the conclusions offered by the authors, and even some of the focus set out in the introduction, may lead some readers to believe that the knowledge, attitudes, and practices reported in the manuscript pertain to surgeons in Nigeria. Since the survey targeted residents, or surgical trainees, the difference between these two groups should be clearly established and documented.
3. The low response rate poses a substantial problem. The authors must unequivocally state what the universe of surgical trainees is in Nigeria, how they were approached, what differences between respondents and non-respondents can be established and which ones assumed, and how the response rate attained compares with similar surveys in the country and among similar populations, if such exist.
4. It is important to know how the survey tool was developed and whether there was a formal process of validation of the survey items.
5. The tables presenting the results fail to convey the meaning and intent of the survey items; some of the descriptions are so brief that it is nearly impossible to establish what the survey item was about.
6. The discussion of results needs to be far more circumscribed and focused on the findings.
Currently, it contains substantial amounts of editorializing about general aspects of health services in Nigeria which, accurate or not, represent the opinion of the authors and do not support an useful interpretation of the survey results.

7. Finally, so the reader may understand the ethicality of the study protocol, the authors should specify 1) whether the surgical trainees' decision to participate in the survey was made voluntarily; 2) whether participants differed in significant ways (clinical, demographic, educational, and so on) from non-respondents; and 3) whether Nigeria, or Nigerian hospitals, have guidelines to prescribe the surgeon-patient relationship depending on the HIV status of patients and clinicians.

**Competing interests:**

None declared.