Reviewer's report

Title: An assessment of the likely acceptability of vaginal microbicide for HIV prevention among women in rural Ghana

Version: 1 Date: 10 April 2012

Reviewer: Rebecca Giguere

Reviewer's report:

Major compulsory revisions

1. In the qualitative methods section on p.6, the authors should include a description of how qualitative data was coded and how many people reviewed the qualitative data (along with how intercoder agreement was assessed).

2. The authors comment on their findings regarding religious persuasion and acceptability in the discussion, but very little information on this is provided in the results section and the table at the end is not referred to in the results section. For clarity, the authors should refer to the table and elaborate a little more on their most significant findings. Perhaps there is some qualitative data about religion that could be included?

Minor essential revisions

3. In abstract (Results, line 6 and line 7), on p.9 (second and fourth paragraphs under Acceptability), p.10 (last paragraph before Discussion), and p.11 (last paragraph, line 11) and p.12 (2nd paragraph, line 2), please change discrete to discreet. Discrete is often for variables and means distinct or separate; discreet means self-restrained, or tactful (and may be similar to covert, as it is used here).

Discretionary Revisions

4. In the introduction at the bottom of page 3, the authors mention the findings of the CAPRISA study in which tenofovir 1% gel was found to reduce HIV infection by 39%. In order to provide the most updated information about the field, the authors should also include findings from the VOICE trial, which did not confirm the CAPRISA findings and was stopped for futility based on a DSMB assessment that there were no differences between tenofovir and placebo gels.

5. The headings in the results section could be modified to be clearer. Perhaps: Awareness (1st paragraph on p.7 in current Awareness and acceptability section); Comparison to Other Products (Paragraph on p.7 starting with “In trying to appreciate how a microbicide might work on”…up to paragraph starting with “Beyond health-related facilities” on p.8); Overall Acceptability (include first paragraph currently under acceptability on p.9 and final paragraph in section describing quant analyses on p.10); Preferred Vendors (move paragraph on p.8 starting with “Beyond health-related facilities”), Formulation Preferences (move paragraph on p.8 starting with “Gels or creams” to this section), and Covert Use
6. On p.12, the first complete sentence repeats the word “actually” twice. It would read better if you removed the first mention.

7. The authors discuss the limitations to their work in the first paragraph on p.11, but might want to be more explicit that they are working with a limitation of surveying participants who were unfamiliar with microbicides and who are not using a microbicide candidate, placebo gel, or microbicide surrogate.

Other Comments:

8. The authors make a good argument for why this article is relevant to the field. The authors assessed likely microbicide acceptability among women at antenatal clinics in Ghana, most of whom had never heard of microbicides before. The authors surveyed women and then conducted focus groups with women and men. It is wonderful that the authors included focus groups with men to get their perspectives. The discussion also provides some interesting comments that support continued assessment of acceptability.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that i have no competing interests.