Author's response to reviews

Title: Study of knowledge, perception and attitude of adolescent girls towards STIs/HIV, safer sex and sex education: (A cross sectional survey of urban adolescent schoolgirls in South Delhi, India)

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Author's response to reviews:

Thanks you for the opportunity to revise the article entitled ‘Study of knowledge, perception and attitude of adolescent girls towards STIs/HIV, safer sex and sex education: (A cross sectional survey of urban adolescent schoolgirls in South Delhi, India)’.

The reviewers comments were very positive and we have endeavoured to address all issues raised.

Kind regards

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REJOINER

Reviewer 1.

1. The two schools were chosen as they both had large numbers of students and
were considered representative of students in that area of South Delhi by the District Education Department.

2. Following discussions with the Education Department, the School Principals were then approached in writing and in person to explain the aim of the study and to answer any questions. This is the appropriate procedure in India. The Principals have the authority to allow surveys to be administered to students.

3. The results cannot be generalised, nor have we tried to do so. The cross sectional survey was conducted as part of formative research to inform the development of sexual health curriculum.

4. Principals have the authority to allow cross sectional surveys to be conducted without parental consent.

5. All students present completed a survey.

6. We are willing to provide a copy of the validated instrument if required. We were concerned regarding the space requirements of its inclusion.

7. Have done.

8. Done,

9. Done.

10. Corrected.

11. Corrected.

12. The discussion has been revised however much has been retained as this information was considered relevant and important by the advisory panel in India, particularly those who were health professionals and educators working to progress safer sex behaviours in youth in India. We were most respectful of their opinions given that they live and work in India. One of the authors has worked in this area for two decades and has since gone back to India (her home country) to progress sexual health curriculum development.

Reviewer 2.

the reviewer pointed out the importance of ensuring the language used in the survey was appropriate and understandable to the target group. This was a major consideration of the research team. As such, all but one of the team who designed the draft survey were from the country in which it was implemented. The survey was also reviewed by a panel of experts in youth sexual health education in both Australia and India. There was only person on the research team who was not native to the country in which the survey was implemented. We were concerned about the sensitivity of the issues discussed within the survey. After much consultation with advisors in India both in the area of sexual health and youth education, the survey format used was considered the most appropriate for the target group. Demographic questions about income were not
considered appropriate by advisory group in India therefore were not included.

The reviewer correctly notes that schoolgirls are often involved in sex exchange. This was not within the scope of our study.

All students approached completed the survey. Students were permitted to interpret sexual behaviour themselves to avoid confounding the study, particularly at this preliminary stage. Questions about vaginal and oral sex were included in the survey although safer sex was the main focus. Condom use by partners was asked within the context of safer sex behaviours.