Reviewer's report

Title: Uptake of HIV counselling and testing among pregnant women at different levels of health facilities - experiences from a community-based study in Northern Vietnam.

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Reviewer: Gita Sinha

Reviewer's report:

Table 1 - Based on how data are presented in similar manuscripts in other journals, I suggest the authors include simple statistical testing such as a chi-square test of difference in proportions, to illustrate whether there are significant differences in the distribution of the background and more importantly the overall outcome variables of receipt of HIV testing, testing by type of HF, and gestational period at time of testing.

In my repeat review, I am still unclear as to what "uptake of HIV testing" means in this study. From my experience, different countries have different policies as to what a full course of HIV testing means. For example, in India by policy, HIV testing should be VCT (voluntary counseling and testing), defined as provision of pre-test counseling, blood test, and post-test counseling to collect results. Thus, uptake of testing would be defined accordingly. In my opinion, it would be helpful to readers outside the Vietnam context to clarify that the "uptake" as measured here is the self-reported receipt of HIV test by the respondent, and that pre- and post- test counseling were defined and asked about separately.

Table 2 - As stated in my prior reviews, it is still unclear from looking at this table as to what the calculated OR stands for. A footnote in the table would be very helpful.

In reading the interpretation of this table in the Results section, there is not a clear correlation to the data presented in the table. For example, the authors mention "unstable job" as a covariate --- however, this is not defined in the text, nor mentioned as a covariate in the corresponding table. Does it refer to the "unemployed" category? Additional examples: the text mentions "semi-rural" residents, but this is not a category in the table. It appears that the significant comparison is occurring between urban and non-urban categories. Finally, the interpretation of testing category and income level should be clarified: there is not a statistically significant difference in testing site at the income level of >3.5 Million VND/year.

Table 3- There are missing data in this table including percentages, and apparently misplaced decimal points. A footnote to explain what the OR is calculating would be helpful.

Table 4 - The "time of first ANC visit" is listed as a covariate, than listed with an
"adjustment for time of first ANC visit". I am unclear as to what is being adjusted for in this specific sub-category.

Tables 3 and 4 - I would strongly recommend that an additional statistician review the methods and interpretations of these data specifically, as it appears that the analysis initially consists of using type of health facility for HIV testing as the primary outcome of interest, then uses this in subsequent secondary analysis as a covariate for additional outcomes of "time of HIV test" and "provision of pre/post-test counseling".

It still seems that the covariates of "time of HIV test" and "time of ANC visit" could be incorporated into Table 2, and odds ratios calculated accordingly, with additional adjustment for socio-demographic categories. The calculations are still incorporating the same data and assessing for a significant relationship to facility for HIV testing, with additional adjustment for underlying sociodemographic variables. The authors disagree, and I think an expert statistician could help clarify this. It is unclear to me whether sociodemographic categories are incorporated into the adjusted models, in Tables 3 and 4. I believe an expert statistician could help to clarify whether the data in Tables 3 and 4 are valid in their presentation or whether they warrant further adjustment/clarification.

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.