Reviewer’s report

Title: Determinants of condom uptake among HIV voluntary counselling and testing clients: experiences from a hospital-based study in south India

Version: 1 Date: 28 September 2011

Reviewer: Arslan Mazhar

Reviewer’s report:

General:

The research question posted in the study portrays independent predictors of condom uptake among HIV voluntary counselling and testing clients with no history of condom use at baseline. A strong point of the research question is that it reflects determinants of condom uptake for the larger population as compared to segmented population. However, the data were from the public health center and do not represent private health sector, if providing HIV testing and counseling services in line with NACP phase III. As the behavior change is a time bound phenomenon, therefore research question could be addressed more appropriately by extending duration between first and last visit. If not possible, statements supported with references addressing change of behavior in small time frames shall be incorporated in the background section. Overall, the background section is very well demonstrated highlighting debatable aspects in relation to condom uptake due to HIV testing and counseling. The method section shall highlight the type of data being analyzed. The study population and the procedures are thoroughly demonstrated. However, it would be ideal to depict study population, subset (no history of condom use at baseline) and matched data with illustrations/flow chart. Data analysis plan is described in details with stepwise approach. The matching and the regression model used to account for confounding in the analysis led to more valid inferences. The results are finely described and serve objectives of the study. The discussion section is not at all supported with debates, minimally reflected with references and demands peer editing. It appears as sub heading “discussion” is the continuation of the results section. In the discussion section, authors shall talk about the consistency of the findings in relation to other studies with strong link with the background section and study findings. The discussion section is not supported with data. The conclusion of the study is extensive and needs revision. Revision is required to improve limitation section. The title and the abstract are compatible. Following are detailed comments:

Major compulsory revisions:
N/A

Minor compulsory revisions:
- What type of data was analyzed? It appears that secondary data was
considered to fulfill objectives of the study.

·Discussion section needs editing. The discussion section shall support study results with the other relevant findings from other settings and make connections with the background section. It is lacking debates with insignificant emphasis to defend external validity of the study.

·The conclusion section is very lengthy and gives impression of a discussion. Though it is supported with significant results but lack punch, what is gained with this study? What’s next? The authors shall alter conclusion into brief outline.

·As the data being analyzed is self reported and leads to “recall bias”. This shall be mentioned in limitation section of the study.

·Different levels of Information regarding HIV counseling among deployed counselors due to varying level of their knowledge and experience for HIV prevention may be observed. This systematic error, “information bias” may lead to dissimilar transfer of HIV counseling services among clients. This shall be incorporated in the limitation section.

·As the data is tracked retrospectively, the temporal relationship to determine impact of testing and counseling services on condom uptake by gender, serostatus and history of multiple partners is weak. This shall be highlighted in limitation section.

Discretionary Revisions:

·The methods used for selecting subset/matched data and data analysis plan may be elaborated with flow illustrations.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.