Reviewer's report

Title: Medication adherence in HIV-positive patients with diabetes or hypertension: A focus group study

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Reviewer: Kasey Claborn

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Review

This original manuscript details findings from a qualitative study evaluating HIV-positive patients who have comorbid diabetes and/or hypertension. It evaluates these patients’ perspectives on the impact these comorbid conditions play in affecting their adherence to prescribed medication regimens. The research question is an important and relevant issue considering the lack of literature on comorbidities and adherence within the HIV literature. The design of the study appears to be based on an adequate theoretical framework. However, there are several important issues the authors should consider which are outlined below.

Major Compulsory Revisions:

1. Abstract, Methods. Include the number of participants in the study.
2. Abstract, Conclusion. Be careful to avoid overextending the conclusions drawn from this study. In the third sentence “Patient understanding, regimen factors, and substance abuse/mental health issues influence medication adherence” is a definitive statement that cannot be drawn from this particular study and needs revising.
3. Background, Paragraph 2. Sentence 4 beginning with “While the majority of HIV+ patients…” This sentence is a little sloppy, consider revising. Also, the authors’ state “control of other comorbidities often requires lifestyle changes in addition to medication therapy”. Please provide examples of the lifestyle change for clarification. It can be argued that ARTs also require lifestyle changes in order to maintain optimal adherence levels.
4. Background, Paragraph 2. After stating the objective of the study, provide preliminary hypotheses.
5. Participants. Provide inclusion/exclusion criteria for participation. Also, note how comorbidities were confirmed (e.g. through chart reviews, pharmacy records, self-report etc.).
6. Results, Paragraph 1. Participant Characteristics. Please note the age range of participants. Also, consider noting the number of additional comorbidities.
requiring medical condition (e.g., HCV, asthma, substance dependence).

7. Results, Paragraphs 3-5, Theme 1. Does this “concern” result in distress for the patients on a daily/weekly/monthly basis? Does it influence medication adherence?

8. Results, Paragraph 6. Theme 2. The fifth sentence beginning with “Or perhaps those patients…” is a fragment and needs revising.

9. Discussion, Paragraph 2. The authors state that “Now that it is possible to control HIV with ART, most patients actively engaged in HIV care are able to achieve and maintain undetectable HIV RNA”. This statement is true; however, adequate adherence remains a problem for ART. Please note the continued concerns with ART adherence and provide citations.

10. Discussion, Paragraph 3. Sentence one is a bit sloppy and needs to be re-worded.

11. Discussion, Paragraph 3. The sentence beginning with “Patients act on their beliefs…” needs a citation.

12. Discussion, Paragraph 7. When discussing limitations, note the limited generalizability of findings and the nature of qualitative research.

13. Discussion. Discuss the strengths of the current study and how it expands upon the existing literature. Provide some future directions.

Minor Essential Revisions:
1. Abstract, Methods. Spell out the number “6”.
2. Background, Paragraph 1. Provide a citation for the last sentence regarding the increase in HIV infection in the 50+ population.
3. Background, Paragraph 1. Spell out “U.S” and provide abbreviation for antiretroviral therapy (ART) in the first sentence.
4. Participants. In the last sentence spell out the number “2”.
5. Data Collection. In the second sentence spell out the number “1”.
6. Results, Paragraph 1. Spell out the number “5” in the last sentence.
7. Results, Paragraph 3. Theme 1. In the second sentence the word comorbidities is misspelled.
8. Results, Paragraph 7. Theme 2. In the first quote beginning with “And she retested me…. Use single quote marks inside a double quotation mark when there is a quotation within a quotation.
9. Results, Paragraph 7. Theme 2. In the sentence beginning with “Similarly, participants who had experienced…” change the word antihypertensives to “antihypertensive medications”.
10. Discussion, Paragraph 1. Add a comma before (2)
11. Discussion Paragraph 2. Careful not to draw definitive conclusions. Temper the first sentence (e.g., “It appears that patients” experiences…”
12. Discussion, Paragraph 3. This is a very long paragraph and should be broken
into two paragraphs.

Discretionary Revisions:

1. Background, Paragraph 2. Consider re-phrasing the sentence; for example “Among HIV-positive patients, comorbidity is common with an average of four to five comorbidities among people older than 50 [6].”

2. Background, Paragraph 2. In the third sentence ending with “…which may worsen medication adherence” provide reasons as to why it may worsen adherence (e.g., increased regimen complexity, treatment regimen fatigue, decreased cognitive function with older age, etc.)

3. Results, Paragraph 1. Describe here that most participants were diagnosed with HIV first and developed comorbidities later in life.

4. Results, Paragraph 1. If the data is available, consider noting whether all participants received care at the same HIV clinic for their comorbid conditions.

5. Results, Paragraph 4. First quote beginning with “Cause they got me taking like three or four pills…” it appears that this patient’s frustration was due to non-control as the authors have stated, but also due to regimen dosage. Consider elaborating.

6. Results. If financial burden associated with medication regimens, social support, and quality of life were discussed please add a brief description of findings.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I have no competing interests.