Reviewer's report

Title: "The time I was in the hospital, I had fears'. Experiences of stigma among women living with HIV attending SRH services in Kenya: a qualitative study

Version: 3 Date: 10 July 2014

Reviewer: Janet Turan

Reviewer's report:

The authors have further improved the manuscript in this revision, and have responded well to the critiques of the reviewers. Some remaining minor concerns are specified below. Also, some minor editing of the English language is still needed.

Minor essential revisions:

Abstract:
1. Background: HIV-positive should be hyphenated in the abstract and throughout the manuscript.
2. Background: It would be clearer to refer to antiretroviral therapy (ART) adherence in the abstract and throughout, instead of just saying adherence to “drugs”.
3. Results: The phrase “follow HIV treatment” would be clearer as “adhere to HIV treatment”.
4. Methods: I would recommend referring to “a thematic analysis approach” instead of just saying “a thematic analysis”.
5. Conclusions: I would still soften the last sentence further to say something like, “…appears in many cases to override fears…”. I say that because it is well known from the literature that fears of stigma do actually negatively affect adherence to recommended health behaviors in many cases, and it is possible that some of the acknowledged potential biases in the current sample may have led women to refrain from reporting lack of ART adherence to the interviewers.

Background:
6. Section 1.0, Page 3, last sentence in first paragraph: This is not the correct citation for this statement. Should be Turan et al PLoS Medicine 2012.

Methods:
7. Section 2.1, Page 4, first full paragraph: The acronym ART has not been defined in the paper.
8. Section 2.2, Page 5: It would be helpful if the authors could clarify further what they mean by “to maintain geographical representation”.
9. Section 2.4, Page 6: Again, it should be a “thematic analysis approach” and
the authors should provide a citation for this analytical approach.

Results:
10. Section 3, Page 6, last sentence of first paragraph: Although the addition of this sentence is appreciated, these are behaviors that are significantly AFFECTED by lack of disclosure, not that affect lack of disclosure.
11. Section 3, Page 7, last quotation: It is probably best not to name specific clinics, in order to protect confidentiality. The authors can put something like X [name of community/clinic] in the quotation in place of the specific place name.
12. Section 3.2.1., Page 13, first sentence: The mixed messages have been given both to health workers and WLWH.
13. Section 3.2.2, Page 15, first paragraph: The acronym ARV has not been defined.

Discussion and Conclusions
14. Discussion, Page 17, last paragraph: Even if fears of stigma are ungrounded, they should still be considered “legitimate”. Could the authors come up with a better word choice? Perhaps “grounded in actual experience”?
15. Discussion, Page 18, first paragraph: Exclusive BFing for six months is safer for infant health (for reasons related to both HIV transmission and other risks to infant health such as diarrheal disease) than mixed feeding or formula feeding in situations where formula feeding is not acceptable, feasible, affordable, sustainable, and safe (AFASS).
16. Discussion, Page 19, last sentence of first paragraph: This sentence does not seem to follow from the study findings. There has not been any discussion of women’s emotional and mental health perse. Or at least the authors should clearly make the link that stigma is detrimental to women’s emotional and mental health.
17. Limitations, Page 21, last sentence: It would be clearer to say, “…may not be reflective of all women of reproductive age living with HIV.”.
18. Conclusions, Page 21, first paragraph: Saying that the health workers are “being not trustworthy” seems like an overstatement. I think the authors mean that the health workers are perceived as not being trustworthy in terms of protecting confidentiality, but not necessarily in other areas. I think this phrase in parentheses could either be clarified or just be cut.
19. Conclusions, Page 21, 3rd sentence: Low ART adherence could be added as one of the potential consequences of low disclosure.
20. Discussion and conclusions: Overall there is a lot of repetition of points in the Discussion and Conclusions that could be cut to make it a tighter paper.

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

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.