Author's response to reviews

Title: "If the patients decide not to tell what can we do?" - TB/HIV counsellors' dilemma on partner notification for HIV

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POINT BY POINT RESPONSE TO REVIEWERS' COMMENTS

Reviewer one

Comment 1. With regards to the comment that the abstract is too wordy and long, it has been reworded and shortened where appropriate while keeping the essential contents as suggested.

Comment 2. Concerning the comment that the manuscript, particularly the ‘introduction’ section is lengthy, the entire manuscript has been reworded and shortened were appropriate. Particular emphasis was on the ‘introduction’ section without compromising the key issues.

Comment 3. As regards the concerns about including the legal professionals as a misnomer, we decided to include them as participants in the study during the data collection phase (as described in the section ‘methods’) as part of an emergent design. Issues about patients' confidentiality/autonomy associated with partner notification arose from the interviews with the counsellors. We therefore performed the interviews with the legal professionals to get their perspective, and if possible how the law addressed such issues which we believed would enrich the data and provide insights into the ongoing challenges faced by counsellors during the partner notification process.

Comment 4. The typographical error on page 6, line 6 in the ‘background’ section of the main manuscript; the word “stidues” has been changed to “studies” as suggested.
Reviewer 2

Comment 1. Pertaining to the reviewer’s arguments about supporting important issues in the manuscript with texts from the interviews; these have been addressed on the following pages in the ‘results’ section as suggested by the reviewer:

- The last paragraph on page 11: the issue raised in the section on ‘Dealing with confidentiality’ has been supported with a quotation from one of the respondents.

- The first paragraph on page 12: the counsellors’ experience in the section on ‘Dealing with partner notification’ has been supported with a quotation from one of the respondents.

- The only paragraph on page 15: an appropriate quotation has been included from a respondent to support the issues raised in the last section on ‘Position two’

Comment 2. With reference to the comments that some quotations from the interviews were inappropriate to illustrate the points raised in the ‘results’ section; where applicable, the inappropriate quotations have been replaced with the most suitable ones to support the arguments. These changes can be found on the following pages: i) page 10, the last paragraph, ii) page 11, the first paragraph, iii) page 14, the first paragraph, iv) page 15, lines 1-4, and v) page 16, the second paragraph.

Comment 5. All the typographical errors in the abstract have been corrected. In the ‘background’ subsection, the word ‘as’ in line 3 has been deleted; and in the ‘result’ subsection, the word ‘voluntary’ in line 4 has been changed to ‘voluntarily’.

In the main manuscript, the ‘background’ section on paragraph 4, line 11; the word ‘stidues’ has been changed to ‘studies’. Similarly, on paragraph 5, line 7; the word ‘lending’ has been changed to ‘leading’.