Reviewer’s report

Title: Integration of HIV care into maternal health services: a crucial change required in improving quality of obstetric care in high HIV prevalence countries

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Reviewer: Amos Laar

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Title: Integration of HIV care into maternal health services: a crucial change required in improving quality of obstetric care in high HIV-prevalence countries

General comments

The paper examines one of the well-acknowledged challenges for improving health of women infected with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). Many calls for the integration of HIV care into maternal health services have been made in the recent past. Some proponents of this strategy illustrate that integrated approaches, while challenging, have been rolled out effectively in several countries and that promising models for integrated service delivery continue to emerge (see published literature and ‘googleable’ technical reports on the subject below).

- AIDS Family Planning and HIV Supplement. Volume 23, Suppl 1, November 2009. http://journals.lww.com/a...
- Study of Family Planning and HIV Integrated Services in Five Countries. Final Report (2010, PDF, 262 KB)
- Strategic Considerations for Strengthening the Linkages between Family Planning and HIV/AIDS Policies, Programs, and Services (2009)

I am not sure the version of the manuscript I am reviewing. Even though they authors indicated in their report to reviewers that they had corrected/spelt out the abbreviated words/terms, “HAART” still appears in the ABSTRACT. “HAART”, and ARVs also appear in the INTRODUCTION. Such abbreviations should be spelt out on first use.

1. Does the debate present a novel argument, or a novel insight into existing work?

As indicated in the general comment, this paper adds little to what is already known on the subject. It is an acknowledged fact that integration of HIV care into
not only maternal health services, but also general health services improves not only quality of obstetric care in HIV-infected women, but also several other health outcomes. Authors may want to have their augments nuanced by raining in local evidence on lack/absence of integration, and also providing concrete steps as to how their proposed integration should be implemented. I believe that will be more beneficial to both readers of this journal and users of the knowledge the journal disseminates.

2. Does the debate address an important problem of interest to a broad biomedical audience?

Yes. The subject of Integrating HIV services into general health services, even though generally acknowledged is a subject that will benefit from contributions of local experiences as to the challenges of such implementation or the absence of it.

3. Is the piece well argued and referenced?

The arguments put forward in the manuscript are good. However, the manuscript will benefit from elaborations on local context regarding what exists or does not exist on this subject. The authors may consider expanding their literature review to cover experiences, challenges, and successes of related integration experiences elsewhere. As indicated earlier, responses have been made to the calls for integration.

4. Has the author used logical arguments and sound reasoning?

Not quite well. I would have loved to see more arguments on obligations of duty-holders to the implementation of such integrated initiatives. Throwing in an argument on the rights to health and citing HIV-infected women as rights-bearers could also strengthen their arguments.

5. Is the piece written well enough for publication?

The writing style is good. The manuscript may require minor additional editorial inputs to correct grammar or typographical errors.

Discretionary Revisions (which are recommendations for improvement but which the author can choose to ignore)

None

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Authors need to spell out abbreviations (HAART, ARVs) on first use both in the ABSTRACT and in the INTRODUCTION. Authors should please confirm the spelling of the word specialities [sic].

Major Compulsory Revisions (which the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Does not apply.
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 declare that I have no competing interests