Reviewer's report

Title: Community views about routine HIV testing and antiretroviral treatment in Botswana: signs of progress from a cross sectional study

Version: 5 Date: 6 March 2007

Reviewer: Sheri Weiser

Reviewer's report:

General

The authors have adequately responded to many of my original criticisms. Yet, there are still a few further clarifications and changes that would strengthen the paper as outlined below.

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

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

1) Page 6, line 7: the authors should add the word “only” in the sentence “the interviewers briefly explained routine testing only to those who had not heard about it.” I think a footnote of the exact wording of the explanation of routine testing would also be beneficial in view of strong claims by the authors of support for the policy.

2) Page 7, 1st paragraph: While the details added on focus groups are helpful, they could be presented in a way that is more clear to the reader. Perhaps, move the sentence beginning with “At the time of the household interviews.” to the beginning of the paragraph to explain first how the focus groups were recruited before they provide the details of who was in the focus groups and how the data were used.

3) Page 8, second paragraph: The authors should indicate how they reduced their multivariate models (ie: whether they used a backwards or forwards stepwise approach...).

4) Page 12, first paragraph: People who were not asked about testing at government clinics but responded in the affirmative that they have been tested may have gone to the clinic specifically to request VCT as the authors point out. Consequently, it is not at all clear that they were tested without consent. Similarly, among people who were both offered an HIV test, and who responded that they had tested, it seems unclear to me that they tested with consent. For example, it is possible that they were offered a test and declined, but were still tested against their will, or that they were tested with consent one time and without consent another time. Based on the information provided, and the way that the questions were phrased, I don’t believe that the authors can comment on being tested with consent one way or the other. They should clarify this in their discussion.

5) The fact that there was a low response rate is a significant limitation and should be noted as such in the limitation section.

6) Page 19, second paragraph: The authors should better clarify what they mean in the first few sentences. If I understand correctly, the authors are saying that the minority of people who had not heard of RHT were told about a “routine-offer approach”, and the rest were not given an explanation. Consequently, it is not at all clear that they were tested without consent. Similarly, among people who were both offered an HIV test, and who responded that they had tested, it seems unclear to me that they tested with consent. For example, it is possible that they were offered a test and declined, but were still tested against their will, or that they were tested with consent one time and without consent another time. Based on the information provided, and the way that the questions were phrased, I don’t believe that the authors can comment on being tested with consent one way or the other. They should clarify this in their discussion.

7) Page 19, the same paragraph. I recommend rephrasing the sentence “Respondents were also comfortable with the confidentiality of the information about them in government clinics” to “The majority of respondents (90%) were also comfortable .....” In addition, a potential breach of confidentiality for 10% of the population is not trivial, especially in view of widespread stigma and discrimination associated with HIV. The authors should consider further elaborating on this point as this represents an important target for intervention.

8) The paper still needs some significant editing. For example, the authors should replace “open questions” with “open-ended questions” throughout, and “closed questions” with “closed-ended questions” throughout. They should also combine the 1st two paragraphs on page 16 into 1 paragraph. There are other minor grammatical errors throughout that will be improved with further editing.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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