Reviewer's report

**Title:** HIV/AIDS awareness and risk behavior among students in Kazakhstan: a cross sectional study

**Version:** 2  **Date:** 2 April 2008

**Reviewer:** Audrey Pettifor

**Reviewer's report:**

Review

The authors present a descriptive paper on the knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) of students in one area of Kazakhstan, Semey.

There are a number of areas where the manuscript could be strengthened.

All are major compulsory revisions

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?

Yes although it is not clear to me that the second aim can be answered by this study. The authors state that they are looking for factors that may contribute to the epidemic in the future? I am not sure this is possible. Certainly this is a descriptive paper of knowledge, attitudes and practices but perhaps a multivariable analysis of factors associated with unprotected sex might need to be done to get a better handle on the second aim.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?

The methods could be stronger, this is a convenience sample First, the methods of the paper need to be better structured by topic, for example, all information on the study population, recruitment and enrollment into the study in one paragraph, all information on the questionnaires and topics/measures in the questionnaire in one paragraph, all information on the statistical analyses in one paragraph. Right now all the information is mixed together and in no clear order which makes it hard for the reader to follow.

How were the universities selected?

Were there any eligibility criteria?

Why were the interview conducted in English? Do most students speak English fluently?

How were the qualitative interviews analyzed? Are they in-depth interviews or semi-structured? Were they tape recorded? How were the 23 people selected for the interviews and how did they break down by the 3 group (med students, university students, high school).
Were the 600 interviews close-ended and structured interviews? What was the response rate for the survey- did you recruit more than 600 and how many refused?

Was informed consent and ethical approval obtained to conduct this study?

3. Are the data sound?

The authors seem to imply that statistical test to determine differences in proportions or means (such as chi-square or t-tests) were conducted? P values are mentioned but these do not seem to be in the text?

If differences in key outcomes by gender, age, location or recruitment venue were tested for these should be more clearly outlined.

In the results, it is not clear when the authors are presenting the quantitative survey data and when they are presenting data from the IDIs. This is only problematic in that the quantitative survey comes from a larger sample and thus may be ‘more representative’ of the students from which they were sampled while the qualitative interviews give context but are not mean to be representative- so please make clear in the structure of the paper.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?

Yes

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?

The discussion seems to mainly be repeat of the findings in the results. Please use the discussion as a venue rather to talk about the key findings of the paper in the context of other knowledge of HIV and sexual behavior in young people in Kazakhstan or in the region or globally.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?

No.. there does not seem to be a limitation section.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?

This could be strengthened.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?

Yes

9. Is the writing acceptable?

Yes
Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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