Reviewer's report

Title: The impact of Provider-Initiated (Opt-out) HIV Testing and Counselling of patients with sexually transmitted infection in Cape Town, South Africa. A controlled trial

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Reviewer: Seth Kalichman

Reviewer's report:

This study examined provider initiated HIV testing and counseling with STI clinic patients in Cape Town. The paper therefore addresses a current and important problem in HIV prevention. The paper is well written and clear. The introduction section reads well and provides a logical progression to the current research questions.

The study design is sound. However, there are concerns with the data analyses. The Study design randomized clinics to conditions but it seems individuals were treated as the unit of analysis. The nesting that occurred in the design does not appear to be accounted for in the statistical approach. If the analysis was indeed nested, then the data analysis section should be more clearly described. Another concern with the data analyses is that the baseline values were not adjusted. The author state that a test of quality showed homogeneity of variance. However, adjusting for baselines provides a true test of the intervention effect over and above baseline. It is not so much whether groups differ at baseline. Rather, the idea is to control for baseline. Baseline values are correlated with follow-up. It is this variance that should be controlled in the analysis.

The significance difference in declining testing was not favorable to the intervention condition. This is an important result. I think a bit more discussion of its implications is warranted.

Overall this is a well conducted study. The data analyses require further attention as do the discussion of implications of the findings.