Reviewer's report

Title: Prepping for PrEP: Community member perspectives from men who have sex with men and transgender women on the uptake and implementation of pre-exposure prophylaxis as an HIV prevention strategy

Version: 1 Date: 7 July 2012

Reviewer: Mark Davis

Review's report:

Prepping for PrEP: Community member perspectives from men who have sex with men and transgender women on the uptake and implementation of pre-exposure prophylaxis as an HIV prevention strategy

This paper reports on a qualitative investigation into perceptions of, and responses to, PrEP, a method of biomedical HIV prevention. The paper addresses an important public policy concern and is competently executed. However, areas for development are:

1. Explaining PrEP
   The paper needs a basic description of PrEP for an audience not familiar with HIV prevention. For example, is the PrEP under trial a time-limited intervention, episodic or lifelong? How is it assumed to work?

2. Explaining the US context
   Some description of the US situation for HIV prevention and treatment is required. For instance, it would be helpful to know something on US HIV prevention policy and how prevention is presently funded. Related to this, what evidence is there that publicly-funded HIV prevention has been effective in reducing the prevalence and incidence of HIV infection?

3. Discussion of whether the methodology is appropriate for the research problem
   The paper does not explain why a qualitative method was chosen to address the research questions. The merits of the approach are left implicit. This is a problem as I am not sure that the sample and thematic analysis are robust enough for what is at stake, that is, shedding light on knowledge about, and the related acceptability of, PrEP. A survey would have been equally useful and, with a larger sample, more persuasive in the policy arena. Can the authors then be more explicit with regard to the justification of this small-scale thematic analysis and its contribution to the policy debate?

4. Further digestion of themes
   Related to point 3 above, some further reflection and integration of the themes is
required. At the moment the themes are listed and supporting data are presented but with limited digestion. I would present fewer quotations and build up the biographical context of each.

5. Some attempt at situating the themes in theoretical context
In relation to points 3 and 4 above, can the authors supply some theoretical context for their thematic analysis? In particular, what theories of HIV prevention do they rely on to interpret the interviews? For example, risk management, psychological theories of sexual risk management, social influence theories, etc.

**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.