Author's response to reviews

Title: Male participation in prevention programmes of mother to child transmission of HIV: A protocol for a systematic review to identify barriers, facilitators and reported interventions

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Author's response to reviews: see over
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The Editors-in-chief
BMC Systematic Reviews
Dear Dr Moher,

Re: MS: 5346201046144535 -- Male participation in prevention programmes of mother to child transmission of HIV: A protocol for a systematic review to identify barriers, facilitators and reported interventions

by Frederick Morfaw, Lehana Thabane, Lawrence Mbuagbaw, Philip Nana

Thank you for the opportunity to revise the protocol manuscript for our review. Please find attached the revised version of the above manuscript, taking into consideration the comments from the reviewer. We found the reviewer’s comments helpful. Below are our responses to the specific issues raised by the reviewer. We hope you will find this updated version of the protocol suitable for publication in Systematic Reviews.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,
Frederick Morfaw
**Responses to reviewer’s comments**

We thank the reviewer for their thoughtful comments. Below are our specific responses to the issues raised by the reviewer.

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<th>Comment</th>
<th>Response</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Abstract</strong>&lt;br&gt;1. The primary and secondary outcomes to be abstracted should be listed here if word count permits.</td>
<td>1. We have stated the primary and secondary outcomes in the abstract as suggested.</td>
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<td><strong>Methods</strong>&lt;br&gt;1. Although I’ve been involved in systematic reviews about a dozen years, I’m not familiar with Saddler’s 2008 guidelines for methodological quality of observational studies. I was unable to access a copy of the cited article, as my institution does not subscribe to the journal Gastroenterology Nursing. This instrument’s items are listed in the appendix to the protocol, but I would like more information on its validity and reliability. Also, is the instrument in widespread use in systematic reviews? Why was this instrument selected over others available?</td>
<td>We have decided to replace Sadler’s guidelines by using Jadad scale [Jadad et al 1996] for RCTs and Newcastle-Ottawa scale [Wells et al] for observational studies. Both tools have been validated and are routinely used for assessing the quality of reporting of studies included in systematic reviews.</td>
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<td>2. The authors plan to include studies from any geographic area. Are studies from developed nations applicable to this project? Please describe how applicability will be assessed.</td>
<td>Yes, we plan to include all studies done in developing and developed countries. We have described a possible subgroup analysis by geographical location (developed vs developing country).</td>
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<td>3. I’m confused about the study inclusion criteria. The protocol states that the title, aims, or outcome should portray a male effect on female uptake of PMTCT services. However, if this is a requirement for inclusion, it seems you will miss some studies that report your secondary outcomes of interest. For example, men’s knowledge of / approval of PMTCT could be assessed by surveys or interviews that don’t include any actual PMTCT service use questions or data. Do you actually mean to include studies where outcomes could possibly (theoretically) affect female uptake of services, regardless of whether uptake data is reported?</td>
<td>We thank the reviewer for raising this point and have adopted her suggestion by rewording the inclusion criteria as “include studies that report outcomes that could possibly (theoretically) affect female uptake of services, regardless of whether uptake data is reported”.</td>
</tr>
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<td>4. Does the current protocol refer only to the systematic review, or does it include the development of the SAMP PMTCT</td>
<td>The protocol will only focus on the systematic review, not the development of the SAMP PMTCT. The latter will be a subject</td>
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instrument? If the latter, more detail is needed. For example, will validity and reliability testing be conducted as part of this project? Or will that occur in a future project?

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<th>Instrument? If the latter, more detail is needed. For example, will validity and reliability testing be conducted as part of this project? Or will that occur in a future project?</th>
<th>of another investigation. We have revised the text to clarify this issue.</th>
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Minor necessary revisions.
5. The protocol needs minor editing throughout. For example, the phrase “experts on the field” should be changed to “experts in the field” and “couples counseling” should be changed to “couples counselling.”

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<th>Minor necessary revisions. 5. The protocol needs minor editing throughout. For example, the phrase “experts on the field” should be changed to “experts in the field” and “couples counseling” should be changed to “couples counselling.”</th>
<th>We have edited the paper and corrected some grammatical errors.</th>
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