Author's response to reviews

Title: Syphilis among people with HIV infection in southern Ethiopia: sero-prevalence and risk factors

Authors:

Techalew Shimelis (techalew03@yahoo.com)
Kinfe Lemma (wudiekinfe@yahoo.com)
Henock Ambachew (henock_ama@yahoo.com)
Endale Tadesse (endaletd@yahoo.com)

Version: 3 Date: 9 March 2015

Author's response to reviews:

Response to Reviewer Comments

We thank the Editor and the reviewers for their useful comments and suggestions. Their comments have improved the manuscript effectively. We have included almost all of their suggestions and below we present a point-by-point response to their comments.

Editor's Comments:

Comment: The authors should carefully revise the manuscript according to the reviewers comments (if possible please remove the comment on adjusted analysis that one of the reviewers had -- the authors to provide adjusted analysis)
Response: We have now revised the manuscript according to the suggestion of the reviewers and the editor.

Comment: The author's state that in Ethiopia, the epidemiology of syphilis–HIV co-infection is not well studied; nor is the consequence of their adverse interaction thoroughly elucidated (line 85). There are several other hospital based cross-sectional studies of syphilis / HIV coinfection from Ethiopia (Eticha BT 2013: PubMed PMID:23550092; Ramos JM 2012, PubMed PMID: 22209287). The authors should clearly state what is the unique contribution of their work to the exciting body of evidence.
Response: Yes, we previously reported the prevalence of syphilis by HIV status in the cited article. But considering the larger HIV population we have, data is yet to be generated to describe the epidemiology of syphilis in HIV infected population in various localities. We have now indicated this information in the introduction section.

Comment: Line 124: "Only those samples positive by both RPR and TPHA were considered to have syphilis"; please provide reference to back up this diagnostic decision.
Response: Your comment is well taken and we have now given the reference.
Comment: Line 150: "infected participants was calculated to be 7.3%"; please provide 95% CI for significant prevalence estimates.
Response: We have now provided the 95% CI.

Comment: Table 2, and Line 153 ";RPR reactivity …non-significant (p = 0.06)"; please clarify how this information contributes to the main body of the work?
Response: Comment well accepted and addressed accordingly

Comment: Throughout the text authors use quite loose terminology to (Line 151:";syphilis positivity"; line 179 "Syphilis was shown to increase with age"). This is not acceptable. The manuscript should be revised and selected outcome/health status (seropositive syphilis? Untreated seropositive syphilis? Else) clearly and precisely stated.
Response: Comment well accepted and revision has been made accordingly.

Comment: Do the authors have information on clinical diagnoses (primary, secondary, early/late latent syphilis)?
Response: As the clinical diagnosis for most syphilis infected patients was missed, we did not include it in this manuscript.

Reviewer: Jose Manuel Ramos

Major Compulsory Revisions
None

Minor Essential Revisions
Comment: - In the material and methods, the autos should include antiretroviral therapy (ART).
Response: We are not clear with this comment but the phrase is already there in the material and method section

Comment - In the statistical section, The authors should include with variables are include in the multivariate logistic regression analyses
Response: We have now revised the data analysis section and specified that variables found to be significant in bivariate analysis was included in the multivariate analysis

Comment - The authors should include what Standard deviation (SD) in the results section
Response: We have now specified it

Comment- In the results, we want to ask to the authors why use crude OR and not adjusted OR. We consider that is better to include adjured OR.
Response: The result that we described in text in the result section is adjusted odds ratio, not crude odds ratio. We presented the crude and adjusted odds ratio in table.
Comment: In the abbreviation, include SD
Response: We have now included SD in the abbreviation list

Response: We have now revised it

Comment- Table 2, the authors should include as a footnote the meaning of RPR, TPHA and ART
Response: Comment well accepted and accommodated accordingly

Comment - In the heading of the table 1, 2 and 3 say: …southern Ethiopia, 2013, but in the material and methods say: A cross-sectional study was conducted from January to May, 2014 at Hawassa Teaching and Referral Hospital. The authors should correct it.
Response: Thank you for the correction and we have now edited it

Reviewer: Angelica Miranda

Comment: Lines 52-55: Why did the authors decide to write about syphilis among pregnant women in the beginning of the introduction? I suggest to drop it and to start talking about syphilis and HIV coinfection that it is the topic of the manuscript. There are newer published references in the topic.
Response: Comment well taken and we have now revised it

Comment: Line 80: It is missing a reference for the cited guidelines.
Response: we have now given a reference for the cited guidelines

Comment: Line 95: How representative is the Hawassa Hospital regarding the HIV care in the region?
Response: Hawassa Hospital serves larger HIV infected population in the region though other health facilities also provide the service to infected clients in their catchment area.