Reviewer’s report

Title: The effect of disclosure on adherence to antiretroviral therapy among adults living with HIV in Ethiopia: a systematic review and meta-analysis

Version: 0 Date: 28 Dec 2018

Reviewer: Pamela Murnane

Reviewer's report:

This manuscript addresses the role of HIV status disclosure in adherence to ART in adults living with HIV in Ethiopia. This meta-analysis aims to inform policy makers in Ethiopia, to potentially facilitate services which support disclosure with an aim of improving adherence. This paper has a lot of promise, but could benefit from some editing 1) to read more clearly and 2) to provide more detail about study eligibility and the included studies.

Overall

The writing could benefit from some editing to be more direct and clear. For example, first sentence, second paragraph "Scale-up of antiretroviral therapy is on a Fast-Track trajectory that was exceeded from expectations." - do you mean scale up has exceeded expectations? And, more generally, there are a lot of data points in the first 2 paragraphs, some overlapping - this could potentially be collapsed into just a few sentences noting the rapid scale up of ART. Overall, the writing could be more clear and direct by tightening up the grammar.

Introduction

- Would be good to update with data from 2018 UNAIDS reports throughout this paragraph

- Second sentence - do you mean 43 "percent"? - please add citation if keeping this data point.

- Third paragraph - here you introduce disclosure as an important factor associated with adherence, and note it is "the most dynamic and difficult contributing factor." - I'm not sure your references support this statement. Simply noting that disclosure is repeatedly identified as being associated with adherence may be more accurate - or noting it is a "major" contributing factor
Methods

- Eligibility criteria - note that you only included studies of Ethiopian populations (correct?)

- Cite Newcastle-Ottawa Scale (NOS) the first time you mention it

- First it sounds like all 6 reviewers looked at every paper, then it looks like 2 for each paper - would be good to clarify in the first couple of sentences of the data abstraction section

- Would be good to describe here what measures of disclosure and adherence were eligible for inclusion (e.g., self reported adherence, pill counts, pharmacy refill; disclosure to partners vs others, etc.)

Results

- "In our search from December 2017 to January 30, 2018" - at first this sounds like a criteria as part of your search strategy for publication date - but surely it is not, presumably this is when the search was conducted. Still this raises the question of the date range for your search -- would be good to add to the methods the eligible publication dates.

- Could you describe how disclosure was measured in each study e.g., disclosure to anyone, disclosure to a household member, disclosure to a sexual partner - if there are important differences in the definition of this "exposure", this would be important to know when interpreting the results

- Could you describe how adherence was measured in each study - for the same reasons stated above re: disclosure definitions.

- Note that extreme differences in how disclosure or adherence were measured could make a meta-analysis inappropriate.

- Could you state the p-value for Egger's test rather than "p>0.05"

- What do you think explains the heterogeneity - are there regional differences, or are differences related to how disclosure or adherence was measured? perhaps looking at subgroups is warranted? what about the gender distribution across studies?

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No
Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Unable to assess

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I am able to assess the statistics

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

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