Reviewer's report

Title: Factors Associated with Depression among Adolescents Living with HIV in Malawi

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Reviewer: Tsuyoshi Sasaki

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Discretionary Revisions

In this article, the authors showed the first study to examine depression and associated factors amongst adolescents living with HIV in Malawi.

In multivariate linear regression they found that a higher BDI-II score was associated with female gender, fewer years of schooling, death in the family/household, failing a school term/class, experience of being bullied for taking medications, experience of being in a romantic relationship, not being disclosed to or being disclosed to but not having shared one’s HIV status with someone else, and immunosuppression.

The strengths of the study include the relatively large, geographically diverse sample and measurement of an extensive range of variables previously shown or thought to be associated with depression amongst HIV-infected youth.

In addition, they used both a validated depression screening instrument (translated BDI-II) as a continuous outcome and a structured diagnostic interview (CDRS-R) as a categorical outcome.

There were several limitations. As aforementioned, the design of the study was cross-sectional therefore, they are unable to conclude any causal direction of the associations found and have no information regarding timing/onset of depression. Due to depressive cognitive bias, youth with depression may have been more likely to report bullying/teasing. Finally, many of the variables were self-reported and therefore may be influenced by social desirability bias (as stated by the authors).

However, the study is very interesting, in that it is indeed the first study include the relatively large, geographically diverse sample and measurement of an extensive range of variables previously shown or thought to be associated with depression amongst HIV-infected youth, and thus I highly recommend publication.

Although, I have a few suggestions that should be addressed by the authors.

#1:

In the sample description, the authors should provide probable information about which co-morbidities (especially anxiety disorders) existed except depression.
#2: In the sample description, is there data of intellectual disability co-morbidity?

#3: Would you tell us the rater who had a diagnosis? (A psychiatrist, a pediatrician, or a child psychiatrist?)

In summary, the work is of good quality and the results convincing, and thus of high value to the community.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.