Reviewer’s report

Title: Examining the potential public health benefit of offering STI testing to men in amateur football clubs: Evidence from cross-sectional surveys.

Version: 1 Date: 11 March 2015

Reviewer: Casper den den Heijer

Reviewer’s report:

This manuscript by Mercer et al. evaluates an important topic in the control of Chlamydia trachomatis infections: examining the potential role of a non-healthcare setting (i.e. amateur football clubs) in screening men for this disease. However, I have a few questions regarding this work.

Major Compulsory Revisions:

1) What was the reason for performing the questionnaire survey after the intervention study had been done? To my opinion, this can introduce an important bias (as stated in the Discussion). With this design, I am not sure whether these findings can be generalized to all other amateur football club settings. Or it should be emphasized in the abstract and conclusions that these results can be obtained after such an intervention.

2) Line 205: ‘... of an equivalent age in the general population,...’. Natsal-3 is designed in such a way that the study population is representative for the whole population of Britain. When you select a specific group from the Natsal-3 study population, such as what has been done here, it is not evident that this is still representative for the general population. Could you elaborate on this?

3) Results are presented by means of adjusted ORs comparing the men between the two studies, but I would also be interested in knowing the proportions of men in both studies that perform high sexual risk behaviour, but who do not consider themselves at STI/HIV risk (‘not at all at risk of STIs’) and do not get tested for STIs.

4) On page 8, 95% confidence intervals (CIs) are missing for all AOR given, except for the last one (line 169). In order to interpret these findings more accurately, I would suggest to add the 95% CIs to the AORs.

5) Lines 164-169: When you look at the proportions: Compared with the Natsal-3 sample, men in the SPORTSMART sample reported twice as many times to have had two or more partners in the past year; about more than 2.5 times to have had concurrent sexual partners, but among those reporting two or more partners, the SPORTSMART men were less likely to report concurrency. What are the differences between the SPORTSMART and Natsal-3 men reporting 2 or more partners that can explain this change in direction?

Minor Essential Revisions:
6) Lines 212-213: '...with around half of men aged 18-35 years plaing football at least once a month,...' Are all these men member of an amateur football club?

7) Lines 188-189: Around one in six of the men had been tested for at least one STI in the past year. This seems rather low. Can you explain this finding?

8) Table 1: it was a bit confusing to me that both weighted and unweighted denominators were given for the Natsal-3 sample. I would suggest to only mention the relevant one (n=409 (?)).

9) Table 1: Please add the 95% CI for the proportion of aged <25 years for the SPORTSMART sample

Discretionary Revisions

10) Line 29: Please add an 'S' to 'SPORTMART'.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests