Reviewer's report

Title: Perceptions of Sudanese women in their reproductive age towards HIV/AIDS and Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission HIV services

Version: 1 Date: 25 April 2015

Reviewer: Annabelle Gourlay

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for the opportunity to re-review this manuscript and to the authors who have made some useful clarifications and revisions to this manuscript. Nonetheless, I believe there are still some enhancements that could be made, or that were not completely addressed following the initial review, as outlined below. Furthermore, although the grammar and spelling has been improved, it is still poor in places and I strongly recommend if this article is published that the English language throughout the article is checked thoroughly again.

Major compulsory

1. Abstract paragraph 2 - I would still recommend that the theories used are mentioned in the abstract, either in the methods or referred to and used to organise the results paragraph. ‘Being pregnant was given preference’ is a bit unclear or the English sounds odd, so the authors could state the number of pregnant women included instead.

2. Abstract paragraph 4 – It seems to me that the two sentences starting ‘mothers are not... and doctors were the...’ are results rather than discussion points.

3. Background line 83-85 – The authors have added useful information about option B+ (when was this implemented?), but the sentence beginning triple ARVs as early as 14 weeks is confusing as this is a different guideline and the authors have already mentioned option B+ which recommends ARVs from diagnosis. I suggest sticking with the information about Option B+ if this was in operation when the fieldwork was conducted.

4. Background line 101 – the authors have clarified that there has been little research in Sudan on PMTCT but I am still not sure from the modifications and authors' letter whether there has been ANY research at all in Sudan on PMTCT. If there are no papers on PMTCT in Sudan please make this clearer as this will really strengthen the importance of this paper. Otherwise, please briefly summarise any small amount of research that has been done and what is not known.

5. Background - In their response letter the authors mention the year that an opt-out testing policy was implemented (in antenatal clinics for all pregnant women?) in Sudan – this would be very useful to state in the background.

6. Methods – I could not find the year the study fieldwork was conducted.

7. Results – the authors have made some improvements to the structure of the
results, although I still feel that the structure could be more closely aligned to their framework presented in table 1 – e.g. is perceived importance of HIV testing during pregnancy part of ‘attitudes/ subjective norms/ behavioural control’? Although the authors have mentioned all the theories they considered in constructing their interview guide, they did not really elaborate on these theories in their background, so this may be why it then becomes a bit challenging to the reader to link the results back to each theory.

8. Discussion lines 361-363 – The authors gave some useful information in their response letter which could be included in the text of the manuscript, for example what they feel are their study strengths, and they also mention in the response letter that they acknowledge the limitation of using notes instead of tapes although this also had other benefits – this information would be useful to the reader of the manuscript. The authors also mention in their response letter that access to PMTCT services is limited to big hospitals, but I did not see that stated anywhere in the manuscript. This would also be useful context to add.

9. Discussion final paragraph - The authors have added some recommendations but they are still a little vague (e.g. functionality and practicality of PITC) or lacking discussion of how this might be achieved. For example, do the authors have any suggestions of how the implementation of PITC in ANCs in Sudan could be improved? Based on their response letter, I think the authors accidentally omitted ‘such as stigma and psychosocial determinants’ from line 372. Other relevant literature could again be reflected on and referenced.

Minor essential revisions

10. Abstract line 44 – I still find the English a bit odd here – perhaps something like ‘most women believed that HIV/AIDS is a serious and fatal condition’ might read better. (minor issues not for publication)

11. Background line 71 – out of all new HIV infection cases in what year? 2014?

12. Background lines 83-85 and 91-93 – grammar revisions needed (minor issues not for publication)

13. Background line 97 – indented? Do you mean identified? (minor issues not for publication)

14. Methods line 129 and 130 – ‘They’ – I would clarify that you are referring (presumably) to the facilitators. (minor issues not for publication)

15. Methods – line 140 – useful additions to the methods have been made, but can you provide a brief sentence on how random sampling was done – ie what was the sampling frame?

16. Methods line 146 – ‘attention was paid to the age factor’ – suggest just removing this and saying women of similar ages participated in the same FGDs. Can you make this even clearer by saying what age bands the groups were? Eg. 20-25; 26-30 etc? (minor issues not for publication)

17. Methods line 156 – ‘Interviews were held.’– I think you mean Discussions? (minor issues not for publication)

18. Methods line 187 – manually analyzed by who? How many people - 2?
Manually, as in by hand without a computer - I find this unclear because you said the notes were typed up and transferred onto a computer so it is not obvious.
19. Methods line 188-189 – I think you mean only a few new issues arose that were not part of the pre-defined themes?

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

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests