Reviewer’s report

Title: Patterns of HIV Testing Practices among Young Gay and Bisexual Men Living in Scotland: A Qualitative Study

Version: 0 Date: 22 Feb 2017

Reviewer: T Charles Witzel

Reviewer’s report:

This manuscript details the results from a qualitative study investigating the HIV testing practices of young men who have sex with men (YMSM) in Scotland. It is a well-written and engaging piece of work which will make a very valuable (and novel) contribution to the literature on this topic. Below I suggest a few changes to further strengthen this manuscript.

Introduction

This is a good, comprehensive overview and provides a strong rationale for this study. There is also a clearly stated aim.

A point about terminology- on line 57 page 3 authors use the term "unprotected anal intercourse (UAI)" which is not a particularly helpful term in the context of biomedical options for HIV prevention. I would suggest either defining this term or changing it to condomless anal intercourse (CAI) which I think better captures what the authors are describing.

Also on page 3, authors use Australian data on testing to contextualise the Scottish data they also describe. While there is nothing inherently wrong with this, I would think it more sensible to use English and / or European data instead or in addition given the similarities in health infrastructure and socio-economic contexts.

Methods

A couple of points in this section could use some clarification.

Line 94 - 96 [page 5]: Were any of the men from BAME backgrounds? I think the paragraph implicitly says not although this could be made explicit.

Line 102 [page 5] - Would be helpful if this table states the mean age of the sample somewhere.

Findings

This section is great and doesn't need any substantive changes.
Discussion

This section is clearly structured and well written. A few changes here should increase the profile and reach of this important work.

What struck me most as missing from this section was a discussion about the discourses of responsibilisation of HIV testing which were described throughout the findings section of this paper. I think paying more attention to these motivations and describing what the implications could be for health promotion, intervention design and potentially for health inequalities would be particularly illuminating. I think this is an important opportunity to highlight how these moral values related to HIV testing have been operationalised and discuss the potential impact on services and individuals more broadly. I think paying a bit more attention to this will make this manuscript more citable.

Line 364 onward - In the strengths and limitations section (which isn't demarcated with a sub-heading but perhaps could be depending on journal style) the authors discuss how generalisable these findings are. I'm not sure that this commentary is necessary. Qualitative studies are almost never generalisable, rather they highlight diversity and divergence within research (which this paper does a great job of). I think including this picks a scab that isn't there.

One limitation to highlight is that these are (relatively) old data given the rapid changes the authors describe in this group.

A further topic for discussion could be the recruitment methods. I would think these could potentially have shaped findings given that it appears much of the sample was recruited from services targeting this group. A comment on that would help the uninitiated contextualise this important work.

Thank you for the opportunity to review this interesting and important work. I look forward to seeing this publication emerge as I feel that it will become a key reference for social scientists working in similar contexts.

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

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

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.

Not relevant to this manuscript

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Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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