Reviewer’s report

Title: Challenges with seeking HIV care services: Perspectives of older adults infected with HIV in western Kenya

Version: 1 Date: 13 Mar 2019

Reviewer: Enid Schatz

Reviewer's report:

The authors have submitted a much stronger paper, particularly in terms of the introduction and conclusion. They now also include additional literature on older persons living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa that is relevant to the manuscript. While the authors have added a paragraph to the conclusion about the conceptual framework on which they draw, I remain concerned that there is no mention of it prior to the presentation of the results, and thus there is no grounding for the results. The results remain a list of headers/themes with information and quotes under each as to why it is a barrier or facilitator of care seeking for older persons living HIV. The authors need to add a discussion of the conceptual framework (socio-ecological model) prior to presenting the results and discuss how each of the themes fits into a specific circle/level of this model to be able to declare in the discussion that the factors/levels interact with one another. Each sub-section of the results should connect back to the conceptual framework, which could be written about in a summary paragraph at the end of the section (only a few of the sub-sections even have this, many end after a quote with no contextualization, and one remains a listing of quotes with very little interpretation at all.)

There are three remaining substantive issues that were adequately addressed in the response to reviewers, but not in the text itself.

(1) The authors claim in the response to reviewers the importance of reporting on the health seeking experiences of discordant couples because of the gendered nature of the responses (as the sero-negative partner: women being understanding and supportive, men being violent and unsupportive). Yet in the text, the authors say that in discordant couples there are "mixed results" - my understanding from the quotes provided and the reviewer response is that the importance of this section is not that the results are mixed, but that they are gendered.

(2) The discussion of the peer group under social support still feels out of place. The authors did a better job clarifying why they chose to keep this section in the social support section in the reviewer response text than in the paper. They need to outline explicitly in the paper how and why peer groups serve as social support and not just allude to it as 'helpful' or 'important to encourage one another'.

The following 2 papers are directly relevant to this work as the focus on health seeking behavior of older Africans, including those living with HIV. They should be cited in numerous places, particularly in the conclusion:

Small issues:
In the Abstract, "Of key" does not make sense, maybe "Of key importance"?
I think it is more appropriate to refer to the work in papers 46 & 12 as work by researchers at the Uganda Virus Research Institute, especially if the two papers above are added into this collection of papers on older Ugandans living with HIV.

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.

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.

Not relevant to this manuscript

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

Acceptable

Declaration of competing interests
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:
1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?

If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

I have no competing interests

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal