Reviewer's report

Title: Living with type 1 diabetes is challenging for Zambian adolescents: qualitative data on ways of coping, stress, stigma and quality of life

Version: 2 Date: 2 November 2014

Reviewer: Cephas Sialubanje

Reviewer’s report:

Major Essential Revisions

Introduction section
Line 74. The authors state correctly that data in Africa is still scarce on this subject. However, I guess they still need to provide a brief “global” description of the problem from the available literature (from WHO?) on the prevalence of stress among the diabetic patients (preferably among the adolescents) so as to give the reader an idea of the magnitude of the problem, justifying the need for research.

Objectives
Line 85 Before the authors ask on the sources of stress, they need to include a question on the perspectives/lived experienced regarding diabetes. This will be in line with their research question which explores experiences, challenges ........

Results
Line 160 The theme "stressors" should describe both the lived experience regarding diabetes, types of stress and its causes, as perceived by the adolescents, caregivers, and service providers. So far, the authors only talk about the sources of stress, and are silent on the lived experience of the adolescents. They could consider splitting the theme into two so that it highlights both aspects; it will be easier to read and will be in line with the research question. For example, one part may be on experiences, while the other part may be on stressors and their causes. Most of the information is there in the text, but it will need to be edited accordingly.

Line 236 The authors only report on what health workers and peer educators said about the quality of care; they are silent on how the adolescents and caregivers perceive these services. They need to be consistent with their research question (introduction line 87) which focuses on perceived quality of healthcare, which should be reported both from the users’ and providers’ point of view.

Lines 341 to 343. The authors state an important point that “only the patients in the urban bigger hospitals are given free syringes whenever available, where as patients in rural areas still need to buy syringes”. There is a seeming contradiction because in the results section they only state that lack of medical commodities...... make some patients stay for days without insulin (lines 249 to
Secondly this is a qualitative study conducted at an urban tertiary hospital; it did not collect data from the rural areas. Let the authors clarify this point.

Limitation of the study

The major weakness of the study is that the study limitations are not acknowledged. For example, the first author collected the data, wrote field notes, and analysed the data, and probably wrote the manuscript. Let the authors explain how the first author managed to carry out all the tasks; the potential bias introduced into the study needs to be discussed. Secondly, in line 209 to 212, the authors state that adolescents experienced social stigmatisation from peers and society...and that social stigmatisation was also common during play with peers. Much as this finding is important, the authors need to admit that this "story" is not balanced as they did not get the views from the peers ‘accused' of perpetuating the stigma. This should be discussed as a limitation of the study.

Minor essential Revisions

Abstract

Under the results section, the ideas are a bit mixed up and not flowing smoothly. Consider editing so that the last sentence on line 41..."Poor nutrition, low socioeconomic status........quality of healthcare” comes at the end of the sentence on line 44 just before the conclusion.

Introduction

Line 65....the sentence....” frequent monitoring glucose” should be edited to read ....” “frequent glucose monitoring”....

Line 70....the word "show" should read “shows”

Line 79....you can use the word "glucometer" instead of "glucose meter"

Research questiona nd objectives. The research question is very clear, but there is need to bring the objectives inline with the research question. For example, on Line 85, before the question on the sources of stress, the authors need to include a question on lived experience and perceptions on stressed. This will be in line with the research question which explores experiences, challenges, .......

Line 113. Delete the words “ the study benefited from including.....”. Instead, the sentence should read “The health care practitioners were included because they......”

Line 130. Should read ..."guiding questions focused on experiences, challenges, perceived quality of care and life......” so that it’s in line with the research question in the introduction section (lines 81 to 84)

Line 133. Include a subheading..."Ethical Approval/consideration"

Line 146 should read “Emergent themes were discussed and refined by.......“

Line 150 The sentence....."the study explored.....” should be consistent with the research question in the introduction line 81 to 84 which focuses on experiences, challenges,........
Line 175...should read “wondered why they had to do ....”. The word “they” is missing.

Line 183...The sentence “especially among the boys”. The word “the’ is missing. Also line 184, the word “the” is missing before female.

Line 199 the word “hypos” should be written in full or better still, it should be deleted and a more appropriate word such as “severely low blood sugar levels” should be used

Line 202 delete the word diabetes. The sentence should read “managing their sugar levels......”

Line 203 You could use a more socially acceptable word, probably “having infections in their private parts” rather than sexual organ.

Line 269 The sentence “diabetes was regarded as being associated with a shorter life expectancy due to poor healthcare system....” may need to be edited to read “due to various factors including poor health care systems, social economic circumstances, cultural factors...........”. This will present a more comprehensive picture on the factors affecting the adolescents’ quality of life.

Line 299 probably repeat the research question as presented in the introduction (line 81 t0 84) i.e., “explored experiences, challenges, perceived quality of care and life of Zambian adolescents living with type 1 diabetes”

Line 301 To convey a better meaning, this sentence could read “this is the first qualitative study in Zambia to explore this subject, providing views from all these three stakeholders”.

Line 304 to 305. There is repetition, delete the word “sources” at the end of the sentence.

Line 307 should read “advice” and not “advise”

Line 314 delete the word ‘adequate”

Line 315 add the word “also” so that the sentence reads “.....in the process of not only adapting to the situation but also help.....”

Line 334. The authors state that adolescents must be taught skills that are more adaptive. Let them briefly explain the adaptive strategies.

Line 336. Briefly describe the main findings or recommendations of this study to help the reader

Line 358 “Diabetes healthcare system” is quite broad. Let the authors clarify to the reader what they mean. Do they mean effect of the strategic plan on the quality of care for diabetic patients? Or is it commodity availability for diabetic patients? Or indeed skill levels for diabetes healthcare providers?

Line 363 include the word among.....so that the sentence should read ‘especially among the girls’.

Line 400 to 401 The sentence is not correctly constructed; needs to be corrected. Probably, it should read .....”stress and stigmatization, poor health care, and advice by family and friends”.
Lines 409 to 410 should read ......"face the challenges of improving health care delivery to patients with TID who also face high poverty levels”
Line 410. The abbreviation CSII is appearing here for the first time. Write it in full, before using abbreviations

**Level of interest:** An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

No competing interest