Reviewer’s report

Title: Knowledge of occupational exposure to HIV: a cross sectional study of healthcare workers in Tumbi and Dodoma hospitals, Tanzania

Version: 2 Date: 18 August 2014

Reviewer: Annalee Yassi

Reviewer’s report:

1. Major compulsory revisions:

The topic of this paper – knowledge of healthcare workers re: occupational exposure to HIV – is important. Although this is a simple cross-sectional study descriptive study, and one would think that we should be focusing now much more on rigorous evaluations of protective interventions, the fact is that these interventions are still not being implemented nearly often enough. As such, I would like to encourage the journal to indeed publish research to illustrate the magnitude of the task that still lies ahead. While I would love to recommend publication of this manuscript, it does need further work before it can be published.

1. There are inconsistencies in reporting of numbers throughout the manuscript: on page 4 in “study population and sample size” it is reported that 3691 and 360 health workers work in the two facilities – this must be an error because later it is reported that 401 HCWs returned the questionnaire for a response rate of 67% (pg. 6). However, even if the number SHOULD be 369 HCWs at one of the facilities, and 360 at the other, the response rate would be closer to 55% (401 / [369+360] 729). This must be checked and corrected before the article could be accepted.

2. The way this article situates itself within the literature review, and their choice of what to cite in the text to substantiate which points, is a little baffling. The article refers to evidence that hospitals can overcome blood and body fluid exposure challenges by improving knowledge of health workers, but they do not provide references for this statement. The authors then reference a 1999 survey in Scotland showing uncertainly in knowledge related to occupational exposure, but it is not clear why they would reference this particular study, unless this article discussed how the challenges were overcome – in which case that should be stated. There are studies in Kenya, Ethiopia, South Africa, etc. that are more recent and relevant. The authors cite a study that they conclude supports the contention that healthcare workers are indeed aware of the risks of occupational exposure, which begs the question of why this study was done. The authors may want to revisit how they situate their study within the literature, both with respect to the gap they wish to fill and what this study contributes.

3. Most important, the questionnaire’s subsection entitled “Knowledge on whom
to contact in the event of occupational exposure” states, as question 14. “At your work place, is there a person to contact for help in case of occupational exposure to HIV?”. These data are reported in the discussion as follows: “It is therefore important that individuals with potential risk of exposure are aware of the procedures to follow and where their first point of contact should be if an incident occurs. However, a substantial proportion of HCWs did not know whom to contact in the event of occupational exposure and did not know when PEP is indicated”.

Question 14 does not ask if the HCW knows a person to contact, it asks if there is a person to contact. There is a difference. Perhaps there is no one to contact. The position could be vacant. Is there an occupational health nurse available? Is this position staffed at all times at these two sites? Some information in this article on the actual working conditions at the two sites would help to situate the findings. It may not be a training issue (i.e. the workers may know the proper procedures in the event of occupational exposure) but cannot implement what they know due to human resource constraints.

In conclusion, this article should be published, however before doing so, it would benefit from more careful attention to details such as the ones noted above.

2. Minor essential revisions:

Grammatical issues and typos
See attached report for greater detail

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**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.