Reviewer's report

Title: A qualitative analysis of the barriers and facilitators to HIV counselling and testing amongst adolescents in South Africa

Version: 2
Date: 9 February 2015

Reviewer: Catherine MacPhail

Reviewer's report:

Discretionary Revisions:
1. Suggest that you use ‘youth’ as opposed to ‘the youth’ – possibly just a personal preference, but it seems to read better.
2. It would be an interesting inclusion for the authors to note why they chose to conduct focus group discussions rather than individual interviews, particularly when they planned to discuss previous testing experience. I would have thought that given the stigma and discrimination that they note is associated just with testing (and not necessarily with a positive result), individual interviews might have been more appropriate.
3. Page 6, line 22: change to “. . . give consideration not only to supplying these services but also to understanding the barriers and facilitators . . . “
4. Page 5, line 14: include a comma after “. . . regardless of the result of the test. . .”
5. Page 5, line 20: the sentence “The legal age for consensual sex in South Africa has recently been lowered to 12 years of age.” - this doesn’t fit into the points being made in the paragraph. I would suggest moving it to elsewhere in the paper.
6. Page 7, line 5: The sentence “The ISHP aims to guide the provision of comprehensive . . . South African school” would fit better earlier in the paper where the authors first introduce the ISHP as a strategy in which HCT will be incorporated.
7. Page 9, line 4: In this paragraph I think that the authors might also have made reference to the fact that accessing HCT in health care facilities is challenging for youth still attending school. Long waiting times and limited opening hours (often shortened by nursing staff refusing to see patients after early afternoon) mean that younger adolescents would be forced to miss school to access HCT.

Minor Essential Revisions:
1. In your abstract I would suggest making it clear in the background section that you are talking about HIV counselling and testing.
2. Page 5, line 17: check this sentence as it doesn’t currently make sense
3. Page 9, line 15: the referencing for the MacPhail et al. reference is a different format to all other references in the paper and needs to be changed.
4. Confirm that reference 27 (Montague et al. 2014) is being cited in the correct place on page 9 – it has been used to reference a point about using peer educators to facilitate HCT but the reference is actually about MMC. Just something to check.

5. Page 14, line 3: change focus groups discussions to focus group discussions

6. Page 17, line 17: change stigmas to stigma

7. Page 27, line 6: change present to presents

Major Compulsory Revisions:
1. There is currently nothing in the ethics statement to suggest that parental consent was obtained for students who were younger than 18 years of age.

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**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