Reviewer’s report

Title: Challenges in the delivery of public HIV testing and counselling (HTC) services in Douala, Cameroon: Provider perspectives and implications on quality of HTC services

Version: 0 Date: 23 Nov 2016

Reviewer: Daniel Fiaveh

Reviewer’s report:

Dear Authors:

I have read your very interesting paper. There is a lot of fascinating information in it and the content would be of interest to the readers of the journal. However, there is more work to be done (on methods) before the paper is publishable. In particular, there is need to provide data to support the claims being made in this Douala case study. The conclusions are sound but validity needs to be looked at. Some minor issue: the paper is not paged. Some comments to improve the paper:

Introduction

1. The first paragraph of the introduction is flip flop and confusing although the authors have the facts in there. That section needs to be rewritten.

2. Lines 20-22: "For that reason, these testing and counselling structures must ensure high quality services". The sentence is confusing, in particular, the use of the word "must". Is this a policy recommendation?

3. Lines 23-30: the definition given by the WHO is wrongly placed.

4. Lines 43-55 of the first section of the Introduction contain too many details which are not needed for this study, I think. The introduction should incorporate further studies from West African context. Some gender dynamics may also prove useful. In this regard, please see:


6. Also, the objective of the study is not clearly stated. See lines 52-54: "this exploratory study sought to document challenges in the provision of HTC services and their implications on quality in Douala's district hospitals". What does this mean?

Methods
1. The methodology is not sound and lack details. How were the interviewees sampled and why? What was the inclusion and exclusion criterion? These are missing.

2. Did the interviewer(s) take notes and recorded at the same time? Summary questions of observation guide premised on the WHO's field-test version handbook may be useful although not necessary.

3. Authors claim that observation was used. What was the rationale for using observations? This was not provided. Did the PI visits coincide with individual interviewees? Were all the interviewees who participated in the individual interviewees also observed at each PVTCC? This will be necessary in triangulating the data, in particular, for validity. What exactly did the interviewers observe? We need details of the observation guide. How were the findings from the observation treated? Were they embedded in the transcripts/quotes or treated independently.

4. Authors claimed that both deductive and inductive approaches were used in the data analysis but what do these mean? How were these done? We need further and more details on these.

5. How were decision trails followed especially in terms of inter coder/rater reliability? Was it a one coder, two or three? We need the details.

6. Were all the participants educated? Authors claimed that all the participants were provided written consent: see line 12, the section on ethical clearance.

7. Although the authors said in the abstract that they conducted individual interviews with 6 nurses and 16 lay counselors, these cannot be found in their methodology.

8. There is the need to present a summary table detailing the interviewees' demography.

9. The authors used the term interviewees and participants interchangeably. Please be consistent in using these terminologies.

Results

The presentation style is problematic; there are too many unnecessary subsections with little information and these detract from the flow of making sense of the findings. It will be helpful if this is avoided.

Discussion

1. The discussion is logically organized. However, it should also: a) state what gap was this study designed to fill even if the conclusion is already doing this suggestion. b) Given what we know now, what should researchers do next? What should they study next? Why? c) Limitations of the paper d) end on a positive note.
2. It is rather surprising that the authors engaged in a policy (evaluation research) and do not find it worthwhile to suggest policy alternatives or recommendations particularly that the study explored the challenges of HTC services and the implications on HTC quality in Douala's district hospitals in Cameroon.

Goodluck!

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

No

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

No

**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:

Needs some language corrections before being published

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