Reviewer’s report

Title: Underutilisation of routinely collected data in the HIV program in Zambia: a review of quantitatively analysed peer reviewed articles

Version: 1 Date: 02 Mar 2017

Reviewer: Miguel Gonzalez Block

Reviewer's report:

The paper makes a useful albeit limited contribution to the analysis of data utilization for HIV-AIDS program management in Zambia. The authors need to clarify the objectives pursued and, if possible, complement with an analysis of institutional collaboration and what authors have to say on the data systems used.

L59. The statement that many countries world-wide routinely collect data on HIV care and services could be supported with a citation to relevant studies on the subject. References could then be used to discuss the results of this study for Zambia.

L 76. The statement "such as wider coverage of recorded items " needs clarification.

L85: Please expand "PMS" here.

It would be useful to say if SmarCare is complemented by other routine data systems, such as administrative systems accounting for health care provision, stocks, etc.

L91-97. Please establish here that you are focusing on published, peer reviewed studies. Also, establish. Furthermore, it is suggested to be more precise in the objective. You are proposing to examine if data has been analysed quantitatively, but you say your "goal was to review the evidence and identify gaps that exist". The objective of examining if data is being analysed is much more specific than the goal. In L 176 and L. 185 you state more specific but different goals that need to be considered in the objectives. So you are proposing to address the description of the range of routine data used as well as the extent to which data is analysed and
utilized. But the results section does not address all these objectives, focusing more on the range of data, emphasis in terms of numbers of papers published and the size of samples.

L. 191. It is not clear why you consider that 6 papers per year per topic is "low". How do you set expectations?

L. 98. This section should be called "Methods".

L. 123. Not clear the meaning of this sentence.

L128. Results is a main title.

L. 129 & L 208. It is not clear why you had to exclude papers not published in journals and those published before 2004. These should not have been retrieved in the first place if the search terms were properly applied.

L 241. Given that no clear referent is proposed to assess sufficiency of papers, the conclusions cannot point to strategies to increase data analysis. It is suggested to focus conclusions on the range of data and on strategies to support analysis for topics where data seems to be missing or insufficient in comparative terms.

It would also be useful to address two complementary objectives: a) the range of institutions and forms of collaboration that led to produce the papers, especially across academic and health service institutions. B) the analysis of what authors have to say on the availability and usefulness of routine data systems for their analyses, particularly on the quality of data with regards to timeliness, completeness, reliability and accuracy.

These two ideas are only suggestions that would lead to much enrich the paper and could be readily done with the data at hand.

English needs a little improvement. Vg. L. 71, 81, L84, L140, L175.
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Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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

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