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: 08 Sep 2016

Reviewer: James Carlucci

Reviewer's report:

General comments:

This is an important topic, and I am glad to see it being addressed by Zambian authors. Overall, the objective and conclusions are clear. However, this article is not very well written and needs some attention to detail, as specified with the specific comments (below).

Was this a "systematic review"? Based on the methods and supplemental materials, it sounds like it was intended to be a systematic review. However, this is not explicitly stated. If this was a systematic review, did the authors adhere to PRISMA (or other) guidelines, and did they register their protocol (i.e. Prospero)? If so, this should be explicitly stated in the title and methods and the guidelines should be cited in the references. If not, this should be recognized as a limitation.

Specific comments:

Attention to the formatting of superscripts in authorship lines 3 and 4.

The word "ministry" is duplicated in affiliation number 2 on line 8.

Further details should be provided for "Zambart" in affiliation number 4 on line 11.

Line 65: It should read "country" not "countries".
In line 71, there needs to be a close parenthesis after VMMC.

Lines 71-73 and 92: Are these priorities listed in any particular order? If not, you might just list them alphabetically as not to connote one priority being more important than another.

Line 73: there should not be a semicolon after "care".

Line 79: There should not be periods (.) before and after reference #7.

PMS should be defined at its first occurrence on line 85.

Line 103: States that papers included used either "SmartCare or other PMS data". This seems to imply that all of these studies utilized electronic records; though, I suppose PMS could be paper hardcopies and/or electronic. This should be clarified.

Line 113/Table 1: Were MESH terms used in the PubMed search? It does not appear to be the case based on what is reported in table 1. If not, this should be acknowledged as a limitation, insofar as the search may not have been robust enough to capture all of the relevant articles.

Line 117-119. Only one author reviewed titles/abstracts and extracted data? This would be atypical for a systematic review; typically, at least two authors independently review articles and extract data, then later resolve discrepancies, often with the assistance of a third reader. This should be acknowledged as a limitation and potential source for bias.

Lines 125 and 126: Why are adults older than 15 years, but children less than 18 years? This does not seem like consistent categorization.

Line 129: How many titles were reviewed, prior to reviewing abstracts? In other words, how many citations did the search strategy yield? Can the authors provide a list of the excluded titles? Figure 1 seems to equate titles and abstracts. Was it in fact the case that abstracts were reviewed for every single title that the search revealed?
Line 133: "Figure 1" should be in parentheses.

Tables 2 and 3: It is not clear to me why tables 2 and 3 need to be separate. It seems like they could be combined into a single table sorted by article type.

Line 166: 62 articles were found; not "about" 62 articles.

Lines 169-171: Perhaps male circumcision or condom use articles were not found, simply due to the fact that these terms were not included in the search strategy? I wonder about the robustness of the search strategy. These concerns could be allayed if the authors are able to provide a list of excluded titles (supplemental table).

Line 171: I think the authors meant "data" not "date".

Throughout the discussion the authors go back and forth between using the acronym VMMC and spelling out the phrase "voluntary medical male circumcision". This is awkward, so please consistently use one or the other.

**Level of interest**
Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article of importance in its field

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Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

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If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

Yes (item 6). I am the lead author for one of the references included in this review. I do not believe that this has influenced my review of this article, but it must be acknowledged as a potential conflict of interest.

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