Reviewer’s report

Title: Male Reproductive Health Challenges: Appraisal of Wives' Coping Strategies

Version: 0 Date: 22 Mar 2016

Reviewer: Kirstin Rebecca Mitchell

Reviewer’s report:

The authors describe a qualitative study of coping strategies used by women whose husbands have sexual health problems. This is a really important public health issue which is rarely discussed, and almost never in an African context, so it is great to see this study. Although I would like to see it published, I feel the authors need to carefully revise the language and terminology in use, address some key questions with regard to the methodology, frame their findings with reference to theoretical work on coping strategies, and move to a more analytical/abstract discussion of their results…

The authors refer variously to 'reproductive health challenges, sexual health, sexual disability and sexual dysfunction. The examples they cite (gonorrhoea, prostate cancer, infertility) suggest a broad concept of sexual health. I think it would help to give the paper clarity if the authors used one term consistently and explicitly defined what they are including within this term.

Throughout the manuscript there is a tendency to use emotive and moralistic language that is at odds with the neutral tone appropriate to scientific writing. For instance 'appalling incidence of marital disharmony' on page 2 and 'couples without children are rampant' and 'sexual defects' on page 9 and 'fines are slammed' on pg 5. For a reproductive health journal, concerns should focus on the ramifications for health and well-being. Relatedly, the authors at times use unusual terminology, where simpler terms and sentence structure would be stronger. Examples are 'sensitively delicate' on page one and 'Information harvested' on page 7 and 'bulging' on page 3 and 'crumbling tendencies' on page 8. Also please use 'women' in preference to 'wives'.

There are some statements made in the introduction, that are not backed up by evidence. For instance, first sentence of last paragraph on page two. And on pg 3, first sentence of the last paragraph. The authors need to tone down their claims in places, and add references where assertions are made.

In terms of the methods, the participants appear to have been sampled from key informants, the majority of whom were medical personnel. This suggests a sampling bias towards women in contact with health services, and who have therefore coped by accessing services. This should be acknowledged and discussed in a (currently missing) limitations section. The authors used a content observational and systematic content analysis, but there are no references so I was not sure where these come from. More explanation is needed on these approaches. A table summarising the participant key characteristics would be helpful (age, parity, length of relationship, nature of partner's problem) as would a summary of the key topics covered in the
interview. Also helpful to summarise the range of problems experienced by partners of women in the sample.

I could not find any mention of ethical approval. This is key if the paper is to be published.

In the results (pg4) I'm not sure what is meant by 'cursory observations shows that the wives are matured enough to handle sexual issues'? Did the researchers feel they could make judgements about their participant's sexual maturity by looking at them?!

Combining the results and discussion in a qualitative study can be helpful but is difficult to do well. The authors could do more to make links between their finding.

The conclusion that male challenges are real sounds odd as it was not an aim of the paper to measure these problems (and if it was, it would be an odd to interview only women). The conclusion is rather broad ranging. I would focus more specifically on how women and their partners can be supported to deal with these problems as a couple.

There is a broad psychological literature on coping with ill health, including within couples. The should use this to help to set their findings in theoretical context.

Pg 7, line 21. I didn't follow this. WHY is it not surprising? In general I would stay away from phrases like this as different people find different things surprising.

Pg 7, line 52. Is there a typo here? 'lives WITH divorce' makes more sense in the context

At risk of unblinding myself (!), I've written a paper on how couples cope with sexual function problems. The context is different but the authors might find it helpful to think about the factors that facilitate and hinder coping. It's freely available on the web.


Level of interest
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:

Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

Declaration of competing interests
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:
1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?

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.

I HAVE NO COMPETING INTERESTS.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal