Reviewer’s report

Title: Echoes of old HIV paradigms: Reassessing the problem of engaging men in HIV testing and care through women’s perspectives

Version: 0 Date: 25 May 2017

Reviewer: Erin Stern

Reviewer's report:

This is a well written paper with the potential to contribute to the field, although I do not feel it is currently ready for publication. I have made some suggestions of how to strengthen the paper:

Introduction

It would be helpful to say more about barriers to long-term adherence to ART in the introduction, and not primarily cite evidence of people defaulting.

Can you provide further clarity of Option B + in the introduction, and also what you mean by 'seemingly healthy' individuals?

It would be helpful to provide more exiting evidence around men's reluctance to test for HIV or adhere to ART treatment due to norms of masculinity, poor access in the introduction. For instance you may want to refer to the articles:


Sexual and reproductive health perceptions and practices as revealed in the sexual history narratives of South African men living in a time of HIV/AIDS. Stern, Rau, Cooper 2014. in SAHARA.

Can you explain more why Zimbabwe and Malawi were chosen for comparison and how these two study sites came about?

I think it is very interesting to explore norms of masculinity from women's perspective; this is certainly a gap in the literature and I think makes the methodology a novel contribution.

Helpful backgrounds on the relevant context in Malawi and Zimbabwe is provided.
Methods

This is a good description but some further details would be helpful. How long did interviews and focus groups last? Who conducted the IDIs and FGDS? How was confidentiality in focus groups discussed/clarified? Can you say more about process of translation and how accuracy was ensured/checked? Can you also clarify overall research question and how men's influence on women's adherence to ART came to be a focus from analysis? Was this a grounded focus out of a larger study? Can you more about anonymous findings in the ethics section? Did the women have to be heterosexual to be eligible?

Findings

With the part of HIV testing, what about women's own attitudes and fear towards testing? When you say that some men would only disclose their status after women test, does this mean men encouraged their female partners to test for HIV?

Interesting low rates of disclosure. It would be great to tie this in discussion to evidence that poor disclosure hinders long term ART adherence

Also interesting point about men knowing they are HIV infected but wanting wives to test; could this be linked to men wanting to blame female partners for acquiring HIV? There is literature from South Africa that suggests this and would be good to tie to this potential in the discussion.

The discussion is very strong, but would also benefit from drawing more strongly on a theoretical framework. For instance, drawing on Connell's notion of hegemonic masculinities seems highly appropriate. While I think the findings about men's poor knowledge, access to ART CARE, and the lingering attitudes to HIV important, I think it's important to also emphasize men and women's agency of adhering to ART and how this can shift over time, and the broader contextual barriers to adhering to ART, even if this was not found in your own findings, but to acknowledge these factors have also been found to affect men's adherence to ART in the discussion. You could refer to for example:

Conceptions of agency and constraint for HIVpositive patients and healthcare workers to support long-term engagement with antiretroviral therapy care in Khayelitsha, South Africa in African Journal of AIDS Research

There is also some literature around how sometimes men being diagnosed with HIV can cause a shift in their identity as men and lead to healthier lives, adherence practices. It is important to understand what makes this possible. Please refer to for example:

Living with HIV as a man: Implications for masculinity by Sakhumzi Mfecane 2008.
Please include a brief point on reflexivity, and how authors were aware of this in the study design, conduct and interpretation of the findings. I hope and trust that with these revisions, the paper will make a strong contribution to the literature on men's HIV testing, including from the perspectives of women, which I highly appreciate for capturing those relational dynamics.

**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 declare 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