Reviewer’s report

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

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Reviewer: Wessel van den Berg

Reviewer's report:

This reads as a very useful and interesting article. The research responds to the gap or 'blind spot' in knowledge on heterosexual men's attitudes to HIV and ART.

I agree with the potential usefulness of recognizing the similarity of findings across the two country samples. I suggest a sentence or two on what kind of contexts it would potentially apply to.

Other studies have found links between disclosure of status and risks for women of intimate partner violence. It's not clear if this study screened for IPV or asked questions about IPV. I recommend it to be included or at least mentioned as a question to ask in future studies.

415: I suggest nuancing or qualifying 'religion has been identified as a barrier' to be specific about the way it is a barrier here. Some organisations like INERELA have used religious spaces as enablers for treatment. Perhaps 'religion that is disconnected from health education' or such a description could be more specific.

425: Any comments about men's support for exclusive breastfeeding? Would be useful to know since it adds information to how men can support PMTCT.

443: What were HCW's attitudes to men accessing health services for their own health and testing / treatment / adherence?

571: I recommend using the terms 'gender responsive' or 'gender sensitive' instead of male friendly. While more women engage in health services they may not agree that health services are necessarily 'female friendly'. The paper (32) provides some background to this recommendation.

605: This paragraph highlights another limitation or omission in the article. The article has not sufficiently addressed the community level reinforcement of gender norms. Fear of HIV due to lack of information is indeed one aspect, but that fear occurs within a context of community norms that reinforce that men should stick to the patriarchal stereotype. Shifting gendered behaviour is not only an individual choice, but requires community level change to be sustainable, again building on (32). Therefore providing information more effectively to
individual men will be an important aspect, but this information needs to be contained in community wide efforts to shift norms, through community mobilisation and community level media, as addressed in 633 to 647. What's still missing though is to note that this communication directly address gendered power imbalances, and that the communications should be combined with interventions that also attempt to equalise these power imbalances between men and women.

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An article of importance in its field

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