Author’s response to reviews

Title: The no-go zone: a qualitative study of access to sexual and reproductive health services for sexual and gender minority adolescents in Southern Africa

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Dear Editor

We are resubmitting our manuscript ‘The no-go zone: a qualitative study of access to sexual and reproductive health services for sexual and gender minority adolescents in Southern Africa’, as requested by the Reproductive Health editorial team.

This manuscript was first submitted to Reproductive Health on 20 November 2017. However, we were informed that the manuscript was not suitable, and advised to transfer it to another BMC journal.

We asked for an elaboration on why the manuscript was not considered a suitable manuscript for the journal, and provided our own motivation for our choice to submit the manuscript to Reproductive Health, and its suitability.

From our understanding, the manuscript fits within the scope and aims of Reproductive Health as it addresses “aspects of human reproduction”, particularly the “countries and population specific issue” of LGBT adolescent sexual and reproductive health, and barriers/access to related services, in Southern Africa. As far as we can judge, our manuscript fits within the range of existing work in the journal. For example the journal has included comparable interview-based qualitative research on barriers to access to sexual and reproductive health services such as perceptions of and barriers to family planning services in Mexico (Dansereau et al., 2017) and denial of abortion services in Colombia (DePineres et al., 2017). In addition, the journal includes publications on youth/adolescent health services specifically, such as on challenges and strategies for sustaining youth-friendly health services (Thomee et al., 2016).

This last example, similar to our approach, takes a service provider perspective on the provision of services to adolescents, but does not directly address LGBT adolescents. The authors however
observe that in Sweden “informants thought that LGBTIQ youth might find it harder to access youth clinics, especially in smaller places”. Our article directly addresses this issue, albeit in the less resourced and morally conservative climate of Southern Africa.

In addition, the article focused on Sweden is the only (searchable) mention of LGBT health in Reproductive Health thus far. Our manuscript would address this important, though marginal population, and extend the range of issues and debates related to adolescent sexual and reproductive health within the stated aims of the publication.

In response to our motivation, we were asked to resubmit the same manuscript, without revisions. We hope that the manuscript will be afforded peer-review, as we believe it expands on and strengthens the reproductive health issues addressed by the journal.

We are looking forward to hearing from you.

For all authors,

Alex Muller