Author’s response to reviews

Title: Strategies for Improving the Lives of Women Aged 40 and Above Living with HIV/AIDS: An Evidence Map

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I largely agree that given the dearth of literature on this topic, it is difficult to prioritize the research that is needed to provide a decent evidence base on women over 40 with HIV. However, I would urge the authors to revisit this and make a stab at setting some specific priorities - including key topic areas - as that will increase the value of this systematic review to the field.

We have added some of this into the proposed conclusion.

1. Page 3, Introduction, first paragraph. These epidemiological data should be updated with the most current information available (I believe CDC is now reporting 2015/2016 data). Additionally, there are other estimates that the HIV population 50 and older reached the 50% benchmark as of 2015, and there are some projections it will hit 70% by 2020. See: High K/Office of AIDS Research (OAR) HIV and Aging Working Group: HIV and Aging: State of Knowledge and Areas of Critical Need for Research: A Report to the NIH Office of AIDS Research by the HIV and Aging Working Group. Journal of AIDS 12 60 (Suppl 1): S1-S18.

The most recent CDC surveillance report I could find is the 2015 report. I have updated the numbers to reflect that report’s findings.
It would also be good to provide the proportion of those with HIV, including women, over age 40 as this is the focus of the review.

We have added this.

2. Page 3, line 12. The first sentence would be more accurate if phrased, "Age at HIV infection, rather than age at …" as one is not "infected" with AIDS, but AIDS is the result of HIV infection.

We have made this correction.

3. Page 3, line 16. This would be stronger if the authors articulated the late diagnosis of older adults with regard to concurrent HIV/AIDS diagnoses and compared that by age group.

We have added this information: Of the 428,724 people aged 50 and above living with AIDS at the end 2014, only 1.6 percent were diagnosed at age 50 and above; for those age 40 and above, the percentage was 1.9.

4. Page 3, line 18-22. This would be stronger if there was mention of the average number of comorbid conditions reported, or some comparison made of the comorbidities in HIV-infected vs uninfected populations.

We have added some information along these lines.
5. Page 4, line 3-6. Citations are needed regarding HIV and reproductive hormones/menopause.

These citations have been added

6. Page 3, lines 13-14. What proportion of women over age 40 with HIV are Black/African American?

Unfortunately, we were not able to get statistics in the subgroup defined by age category and other characteristics, because only marginal information is reported.


Thank you for these suggestions. We have looked at them and have added these concepts and citations to the paper.

8. Page 20, line 3. In the first recommendation, it would be helpful for the authors to unpack what they mean by "overall burden" in the first recommendation.

This has been clarified
9. Page 20, lines 16-17 and 20. The correct acronym for the Women's Interagency HIV Study is WIHS, not WISE. The same study is incorrectly named as the Women's Interagency Health Study in line 20.

Corrected. Thank you.

10. The paper would benefit with a concluding paragraph as ending with the bulleted list seems abrupt.

We have added a conclusion paragraph.