Author’s response to reviews

Title: Treatment of cervical cancer in HIV seropositive women from developing countries: A protocol for a systematic review

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Author’s response to reviews:

Judy Wright, MSc
Systematic Reviews Journal

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Dear Judy Wright

RE: SYSR-D-17-00188 Treatment of cervical cancer in HIV seropositive women from developing countries: A protocol for a systematic review

Many thanks for your email dated 15 November 2017. We thank you and the reviewers for your very helpful comments. We have revised the paper in light of these; please see response below for details of the revisions made. All changes made are highlighted in red font in the revised manuscript.

I hope you now find the paper suitable for publication and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Witness Mapanga MPH
PhD Researcher

Responses to reviewer’s comments

Reviewer #2
This is a well written paper. My only problem is that within the methods section you constantly have to refer to the already published protocol on the prevention of cervical cancer (ref 13 in bibliography) This might be a problem for readers who do not have access to the paper.

Response: We thank the reviewer for this overview. The team have added more information accordingly across the whole document

1. Studies are limited to only those in English - What about those in other languages?

Response: We thank the reviewer for this question. We have corrected our inclusion criteria to include non-English language studies. In addition, we have limited resources in terms of fluency in other languages and financing translations to English language, hence the team will sought the help of volunteers in translations.

2. Eligibility Criteria - I don't think it is necessary to specify that the population will be women as cervical cancer by default can only occur in females

Response: We thank the reviewer for their suggestion. The criteria specifying that “the population or sample of interest are women” have been removed (Studies’ eligibility criteria, page 6)

3. Studies done across developed and developing countries - again in order to understand what will be done the reader has to go to the already published protocol

Response: A statement alluding to what is to be done has been added (Page 6, paragraph 1). The review team will extract results from the developing countries where it is possible and will contact study authors for more information if it is not available.

Associate Editor

P2

*Line 18-19: replace ‘effective more’ with ‘more effective’ for a smoother flowing sentence

Response: We replaced ‘effective more’ with ‘more effective’ (Page 2, line 18-19)

*Line 20: Consider re-wording ‘The aim of this protocol is to offer guidance on how to systematically review cervical cancer treatment methods available for HIV seropositive women in developing countries’. Protocols usually report the plan for a systematic review rather than offer guidance.
Response: We thank the Editor for this suggestion and the team have re-worded the aim as follows ‘The aim of this protocol is to offer a plan on how to systematically review cervical cancer treatment methods available for HIV seropositive women in developing countries’ (Page 2, line 20)

*Line 34-35 delete ‘while’
Response: ‘while’ was deleted as per the Editor’s suggestion (Page, line 34-35)

*P3 – the link to the prospero record does not work (https://www.crd.york.ac.uk/PROSPERO/searchquick.php?usehomepage=true)
Response: We thank the Editor for this vital identification. We have rectified this and the correct link is as follows https://www.crd.york.ac.uk/PROSPERO/display_record.php?RecordID=54676

P4

*Line 10-11 delete ‘still’, it’s not necessary and this will avoid repetition of still used in previous sentence
Response: We deleted ‘still’ as per the Editor’s suggestion (Page 4, line 10-11)

*Line 14-15 add ‘the’ to say ‘the brain drain’
Response: We added ‘the’ to say ‘the brain drain’ as suggested by the Editor (Page 4, line 14-15)

*Line 30 – add ‘cancer’ to say ‘cervical cancer’
Response: We added ‘cancer’ to say ‘cervical cancer’ as suggested (Page 4, line 30)

*Line 43 add ‘the’ so it reads ‘the stage of lesion’
Response: We added ‘the’ so it reads ‘the stage of lesion’ as suggested (Page 4, line 43)

*Line 45-6 add ‘a’ to say ‘due to a lack of’
Response: We added ‘a’ to say ‘due to a lack of’ as suggested (Page 4, line 45-46)

P5

*Line 4-7 change ‘effective more’ to ‘more effective’
Response: We replaced ‘effective more’ with ‘more effective’ (Page 5, line 4-7)

*Line 11-12 should read ‘utilised’
Response: We thank you. Replaced ‘utilise’ with ‘utilised’ (Page 5, line 11-12)

*Line 14, remove ‘the treatment of’ within the sentence to shorten it

Response: We removed ‘the treatment of’ from the sentence (Page 5, line 14)

*Line 17-22. Remove ‘Therefore’ and give evidence (a reference or details of any searches done) of the lack of guidelines/strategies. It doesn’t follow that the lack of guidelines and strategies in cervical cancer and HIV is due to the lack of utilisation of equipment, personnel and the lack of documentation of treatment procedures. It could be the other way around; there is a lack of utilisation of equipment because there is a lack of guidelines and strategies.

Response: We removed ‘Therefore’ and the sentence now starts as ‘There is lack of evidence…’ (Page 5, line 17-22)

We added evidence (two references) on the lack of guidelines/strategies for screening, vaccination against HPV, prevention and treatment of cervical cancer in HIV seropositive women in most developed countries (Viviano et al, 2017; Nakisigea et al, 2017). (Page 5, line 17, 22)

P6

*Inclusion criteria. Limiting to peer-review articles and English only articles could introduce a bias to the study. Clear rationale should be given for these limitations. Non-English language articles can be sought as part of the search, and included in the review where translation of the data is feasible (e.g. a volunteer will translate the data you need). Other non English potentially relevant studies can be parked in the review as ‘awaiting assessment’, indicating to the reader that further evidence is available. Grey literature – conferences, dissertations, government health reports, should be normally be sought and quality assessed alongside peer-reviewed articles.

Response: We want to thank the Editor for this important input and we have duly corrected the inclusion criteria and included grey literature and non-English language articles. (Page 7, line 9-11)

P7

Search strategy

*Replace PubMed/Medline with just ‘PubMed’, this is sufficient to indicate which version of Medline you are searching.

Response: Thank you. We have replaced ‘PubMed/Medline’ with just ‘PubMed’ (Page 7)

*Replace ‘as well as conduct’ with ‘as well as conducting’

Response: We have replaced ‘as well as conduct’ with ‘as well as conducting’ (Page 7)
*Add the planned dates of coverage of databases (as per PRISMA-P item 9)

Response: Planned dates of coverage of databases were included as per PRISMA-P item 9. Database searches will be from 1980 onwards (Page 7)

*Consider including health databases specifically covering developing countries e.g. 3ie Systematic Reviews, WHO library and databases, World Bank website. These resources may also include grey literature.

*Consider including databases and websites containing on-going research. WHO ICTRP trials register and clinicaltrials.gov are recommended.

Response: We thank the Editor. The team have considered these extra health databases, websites and included them in their search strategy (Page 7)

*The searches are reported correctly, however they will only retrieve studies mentioning the phrases like ‘developing country’ or ‘low income country’. They will not retrieve studies that mention a Cervical Cancer – HIV intervention in specific country e.g. ‘Ghana’ that does not also have the ‘developing country’ or ‘low income country’ phrase. It is suggested that the geographical search concept is extended to include country names of developing countries.

Response: We thank the Editor for this suggestion. The team extended the geographical search concept to include names of developing countries as suggested by the Editor. (Page 7)

P8 line 54

*replace ‘are going to be’ with ‘will be’

Response: we replaced ‘are going to be’ with ‘will be’ (Synthesis, page 9)

*Line 54-56. Do you mean the results of the planned ‘prevention’ review rather than the ‘prevention’ protocol? Protocols don’t report results.

Response: We thank you. The team revised the statement according to the Editor’s suggestions (Synthesis, page 9)

*P7-8 – add details of mechanisms for managing the data e.g. use of reference management and other software to manage the study records found, management of data extraction records (as per item 11a, PRISMA-P)

Response: We thank you. The team have added a section on data management (Data management, page 9)