Author’s response to reviews

Title: “Effects of antiretroviral therapy among HIV positive adults on HIV infections among young women: a systematic review protocol”.

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Author’s response to reviews:

31th January 2018

Dear Editor,

Re: Responses to Reviewers Comments – Project ID: SYSR-D-18-00421

Please find below a point-by-point response to the issues raised by the reviewer. The changes made to the manuscript are highlighted in track changes in the revised version.

Original Title: Effects of antiretroviral therapy in HIV positive adults on new HIV infections among young women: a systematic review protocol
Reviewer #1

1. Authors have sufficiently addressed the concerns and the manuscript seems now acceptable for publication

We thank the reviewer for these positive comments and for making our protocol stronger in content through their earlier comments.

Reviewer #2

1. "The extraction form will be used to extract relevant data from the eligible studies such as: bibliometric information, participants’ demographics, study location, reported outcomes and measures of effect related to the risk of HIV infection among young women in the study, and other outcomes." You need to include more information on the included studies. Please include in your extraction form the 1) type of intervention(s) and characteristics of the interventions from each study and 2) the intervention setting, not just the location - i.e. the universe from which the population is selected (e.g. randomly sampled from an entire community, convenience sample from a clinic, etc)

We appreciate the reviewer’s comments on the extraction form and have made the following changes to line 228 – 232 to provide more clarity on what data will be extracted:
The data extraction form to be used to extract relevant information from the eligible studies has been developed to include four main heading: bibliometric information, participants demographics, reported outcomes and article research variables. A detailed description of the extraction form is provided as Supplementary in Appendix 2. Any changes to be made during the extraction process will be reported in the final manuscript.

2. The population in which you are measuring the outcome (new incidence among young women) is different than the population receiving the intervention (adults 18+ HIV+). The way it is written it is confusing because you are not looking at the main outcomes and target population of the studies to be included, but you are examining a specific age subgroup of the wider population. I would like to see more explicit language about examining a specific age-subgroup within the included studies and how you will interpret this. Please refer to the Cochrane Handbook - https://handbook-5-1.cochrane.org/chapter_9/9_6_2_what_are_subgroup_analyses.htm

We thank the editor for this comment and understand the importance of reporting on subgroup analysis in our current protocol. However, the analysis we are proposing is not a subgroup analysis per se. We are looking at the effect of a population level intervention on the sub-population of interest. For example, when examining the effects of mass media campaigns on immunization levels, the levels of immunization in children is not a subgroup analysis. We have clarified this in line 169-171:

While the intervention (expanded access to ART) will occur in the general population, the population of interest is the young women aged 15-24 years, and therefore outcomes will only be measured in this target population.

We have further added the following paragraph from line 249-250 to address this comment:
Given the purpose of this review, i.e. to collect data to inform a simulation model, no subgroup analyses are planned.

We trust you will find this in order.

Yours’ Sincerely,

Prof. Peter Nyasulu