Letter: article 570

25 October 2011

Dear Editor

I cannot trace your letter of 19 October, but I will respond in track changes – and add relevant aspects from the printed copy of 19 October 2011. Please see the changes implemented in track changes in the actual document as well because you seem to have missed some of our previous comments and corrections.

Kindly note that our previous corrections for this manuscript had been submitted on 17 June, and that we were under the impression that the manuscript had been accepted for publication, after that. So these letters of 17 AND 19 October (16 weeks after submitting our revisions) came as buckets of cold water over our heads.

Nevertheless, we will try to implement the reasonable corrections.

I am on my way to the USA till 14 November 2011. If there are any serious queries in the mean time, you can contact Prof **[**Were removed to ensure blind peer review]

We sincerely hope that these will be the very last comments, because we seem to get a totally new lot of corrections, every single time.

Yours sincerely

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 17 October 2011

Dear Prof **[**Were removed to ensure blind peer review]

**HIV/AIDS KNOWLEDGE AND SEXUAL BEHAVIOURS AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL LEARNERS IN HARARE, ZIMBABWE**

The work presented here is on the HIV/AIDS knowledge of 75 students from 4 schools in Zimbabwe. The conclusion reached by the authors is that learners are aware of and has knowledge about HIV/AIDS but a number of misconceptions exist. The recommendations made are not closely enough linked to the data collected and that must be rectified. The content of the paper could be of interest to HSAG readers but inconsistencies, unclear and incomplete in formation need to be rectified first.

**Abstract**

The conclusion of the abstract is 'reaching', why is the content of radio stations linked to what happens at schools? The recommendation should rather be that schools engage with radio stations regarding appropriate AIDS content even if this does not guarantee that the students would actually be exposed to/listen to the report depending on when it's on. Also how does easier access to VCT ensure that learners use it? Why is there no recommendation about addressing the misconceptions identified in learner's knowledge? Since the learners are not sexually active yet, AIDS information must be provided swiftly to utilize this window of opportunity. The conclusion does not make this issue a strong enough point.The above comments must obviously be addressed in the Opsomming as well. Why are there 2 'gevolgtrekking' sections in the opsomming? All these aspects have been addressed in the manuscript – I am NOT going to retype them here because these comments had apparently been ignored in the past.

**Introduction**

Where references 14 and 26, are used, are there more recent statistics? No there are NOT more recent statistics in Zimbabwe – as explained in June 2011 – Zimbabwe does not have finances nor resources to update their statistics and there is also no fuel to travel to check any statistics – we really cannot fabricate any later statistics. The political situation and the extremely high inflation rate should be self-explanatory to any person knowledgeable about the situation in Zimbabwe for the past decade or more. Line 130, our document has no line 130 with anything written in it – I searched ‘school’ but could not trace any sentence with school twice in one sentence the repetitive use of the word school is redundant. The repetitive use of ‘school’ was removed – see track changes. Lines 155-157, ? 165 change the sentence as follows; "Based on these findings, recommendations could be made for enhancing the prevention education conveyed during HIV/AIDS information sessions in Zimbabwe’s schools." Added at the end of the abstract – no recommendation fits under the introduction section – as indicated by te the editor. Line 198 ' non probability sampling', shouldn't this rather be 'convenience sampling'. Done

**Research design** states that 'a non-experimental exploratory and descriptive quantitative approach was followed but the 'quantitative' part is not defined/clarified/explained.

Under **population and sampling** (line 210), was the sample representative and which sampling techniques was used to recruit participants. A convenience sample is never representative of any population – it cannot claim to be thus

**Data collection instrument**

Was this existing instrument or specifically developed for this study? Line 242, was the instrument piloted? In the ethics section; how was anonymity and confidentiality ensured? The entire study was not piloted but the interview schedule was pretested as indicated in the manuscript.

In the **data analysis** section, can 'open-ended questions' really be analysed quantitatively? Should it be qualitatively? Yes, open-ended questions can definitely be analysed quantitatively if they are grouped. No these open ended questions were NOT analysed quantitatively.

In the **'definition of key terms section'**, HIV/AIDS knowledge and sexual behaviours should also be defined as key terms? This is regarded as being ‘self evident’ to the extent that most journals do not expect these definitions. The readers of HSAG should all be familiar with these terms, (and all lay people should also be familiar with them – even school children must know these terms) and therefore these definitions were not added.

In line 333, what exactly is meant by 'correct answers about AIDS'? Lines 334-336, this paragraph is not very clear. What does the author(s) consider as an acceptable level of AIDS knowledge? Sentences rephrased

Maybe add information on the content of the questions – the type of questions is self evident from the answers’ discussions. Line 338, what is considered 'knowledgeable'? sentence changed as suggested The sentence at lines 361-362 is odd and might read better if phrased as 'less ?FEWER participants reported ?a blood transfusions? etc as a mean of HIV trans

Under 'learners reported sexual behaviour', the results maybe beinfluenced by the fact that the participants were interviewed. Why was a survey without an interviewer not used? It is not clear whether the participants would in an interview report truthfully that they were sexually active. The last sentence of this section is badly worded and must be re-phrased.

Under **limitations of study**, around line 514, add a sentence about the fact that the small sample number was a limitation in itself. At line 516, mention that the sample was not representative and that only descriptive statistical analysis could be applied. Added

Some grammar and spelling errors in conclusion, also the conclusion ends too abruptly. References, the following references must be provided in full; MOESC, MOHCW< MYDGEC, UNAIDS, UNICEF, WHO, ZDHS. All these abbreviations are in the list of references. It is acceptable to provide the abbreviation for a reference if the abbreviation indicates the full term in the list of references. All these full terms will make the manuscript much longer, we are willing to do this but only if the executive editor wants this to be done, because we do not wish to implement changes, only to reverse them later on.

General; not all HSAG readers will know what exactly is meant by form,this has been explained at the beginning of the manuscript and initially both form and grade were indicated every time – the research was done in Zimbabwe on Form 1 learners – therefore it could not be totally changed to grade 8 learners – also readers beyond the borders of SA might read HSAG- relate to standard or grade for South African readers. There are still some grammar issues throughout the document, some are referred to earlier but the author(s) must ensure this is addressed.

The authors are invited to resubmit the mentioned article. The article will be re-evaluated by the evaluators. The author needs to comply with the following guidelines:

* A revised and corrected article according to the above-mentioned points raised by the reviewers;
* Accompanied by a separate letter responding to each point raised by the reviewers (point by point), for example:
* Point 3: The reviewer suggested that the methods be described in more detail. On. p. 4, par. 3, 3rd line, a sentence was added to explain how the study was performed;
* Indicating thereby (see example above) also with thoroughness and correctness how each of these points were addressed;
* Indicating in the attached revised article where in the article the changes has been made (the author is advised to use the function of track changes in this event), allowing the editor to view the actual change as it was implemented in the manuscript.

Health SA Gesondheid reserves the right to use the facility of Turnitin in any stage of the peer review process.

Kind regards

Charlene Downing

Project manager: Health SA Gesondheid

For the Professional Editor

The editor says there is no such word as plural ‘youths’ for youth and that only the singular must be used. I differ. The Oxford Dictionary of Fundamental English specifies that there is indeed a plural form of ‘youths’ – so I accepted the Oxford Dictionary’s grammar rule

Afr “die jeug” = the youth

Afr “jeugdiges” = youths