

30 January 2016

Attn: Stewart Landers, JD, MCP

Associate Editor, *American Journal of Public Health*

Dear Mr. Landers:

Thank you for your time in reviewing the submission of our Brief Report, “High HIV incidence rate in a mid-size city among young Black men who have sex with men requires an increased prevention response.”

This manuscript is the first of a series reporting on findings from a demonstration project, Project Silk. A recreation-based safe space for LGBT youth of color in Pittsburgh, Project Silk is a unique practice model that incorporates HIV/STI testing, medical care linkage, social service provision, mental health care, and biobehavioral interventions. This manuscript reports on HIV incidence among young Black MSM (mean age: 19.7) who received repeated HIV testing at Project Silk between 2013—2015. The HIV incidence rate was 11.8% (95% CI: 4.3%, 26.2%). Our manuscript adds to the literature in three important ways. First, it provides further evidence that young Black MSM in the U.S. are at tremendous risk of HIV infection. Second, it demonstrates that even mid-size cities with otherwise low HIV prevalence may be experiencing unreported, explosive epidemics among young Black MSM. Finally, it gives community-based organizations a model by which to calculate site-specific HIV incidence rates among participants receiving regular HIV testing, in lieu of local or state HIV incidence rate data.

We have no conflicts of interest to disclose. We recognize and appreciate that *American Journal of Public Health* prefers six or fewer authors on published manuscripts. However, we would like to request that an exception be considered, as this manuscript is the culmination of a three-year community project, and all nine authors listed were essential contributors to the final manuscript.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our manuscript submission.

All the best,

Mackey Reuel Friedman, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor

Department of Infectious Diseases and Microbiology

Graduate School of Public Health

University of Pittsburgh