Reviewer’s report

Title: Susceptibility to intestinal infection and diarrhoea in Zambian adults in relation to HIV status and CD4 count

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Reviewer: Eric Houpt

Reviewer’s report:

I reviewed the manuscript “Susceptibility to intestinal infection and diarrhoea in Zambian adults in relation to HIV status and CD4 count.”

Overall the manuscript is important and should be published because its size is excellent and it addresses important uncertainties in the etiology of HIV-associated enteric disease in Africa. The weakness is the reliance on microscopy (was this read by a single microscopist, or more than one?) without antigen detection or PCR. The authors should also elaborate on details of enteric culture (which media, etc) since this can skew results. It is also not mentioned clearly how mixed infections were handled.

I would suggest softening the language, for instance “Certain parasites were less frequently detected in more watery stools, confirming their lack of pathogenicity” would be better stated “consistent with their lack of pathogenicity,” because it is not possible to state with complete confidence that, for instance, I. butschlii can never be a pathogen. Likewise, “Certain protozoa were less common in HIV infected participants, probably due to self-treatment with antimicrobials” is overstated and would be better termed “possibly,” since certainly the flora of an HIV patient could be different for other reasons such as immunosuppression, and use of antimicrobials was not described in this paper.

Finally, the high rate of recovery of Citrobacter rodentium should be discussed, since this is not frequently reported.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests