Reviewer’s report

Title: Delays in starting antiretroviral therapy in patients with HIV-associated tuberculosis accessing non-integrated clinical services in a South African township

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Reviewer: JANTJIE TALJAARD

Reviewer’s report:

1. The 1st sentence in Methods - page 4 - “The Hannan Crusaid ART clinic in Gugulethu township, Cape Town, has provided ART free of charge since 2002 under the South African national guidelines [12]” is confusing as the guideline referenced is dated 2004. However does not influence the results and can just be rephrased.

2. It is not mentioned whether the 13% of patients who died or whose treatment were deferred was equally represented in both groups, and if not, how it influences the interpretation of the results.

3. The fact that it takes longer to start ART when one refers a TB patient from a non-HIV service to a dedicated HIV service is obvious and not surprising.

4. Overall it remains a relevant study for the specific geographical area of practice (and may also be relevant to other areas in the world with similar service models) as it quantifies the delays adequately and motivates strongly for an integrated HIV/TB service.

4. The study design including methods and data is sound and the discussion/conclusion are well formulated, balanced and based on the data presented.

5. Limitations are highlighted appropriately.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.