Author's response to reviews

Title: Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) types Western blot profiles as surrogate markers of HIV disease progression and predictors of vertical transmission among pregnant women in Harare, Zimbabwe

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editor

Thank you for reviewing our manuscript ID MS: 7764721783949173 entitled “Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) types Western blot profiles as surrogate markers of HIV disease progression and predictors of vertical transmission among pregnant women in Harare, Zimbabwe”.

All reviewers’ comments have been addressed in line with their suggestions as detailed below including correction of grammatical errors. Changes made are shown in red text in the revised manuscript.

We have included a more detailed:

- Review of prior work especially in Zimbabwe added, see Introduction Paragraph 2 Lines 3-5
- Strength of this current study introduced. See introduction section, Paragraph 3 lines 1-4
- Weaknesses of the study discussed in Discussion section last paragraph, last 3 lines also in the abstract’s conclusion section lines 2-3

Methodology has also been detailed, methodology section under mother’ tests, last 2 lines and or referenced, see ref18 also under same sub section, paragraph 2 lines 4-5

**Major compulsory revisions**

**Abstract**
The abstract has been re-written addressing the reviewers’ comment, see text in red.

**Introduction:**
Line 2: Zero added after 2 to read 20 million as suggested.

Line 3: Corrected to read “HIV has been shown to have arisen…” [2-5]

Line 10: Word “largely” inserted before “confined” to read “HIV-2 is largely confined to…”

Paragraph 1, last lines: Reframed to read “Distinguishing the type of HIV within a population is important for accurate surveillance and diagnosis as well as administration of appropriate antiretroviral therapies” as suggested

Paragraph 2, Lines 1-3: Restructured to incorporate the reviewer’s suggestion see Introduction paragraph 2 lines 3-8.
Paragraph 2, last line: Word “most” added before “specific” to read: “… as the most specific antigen for diagnosing HIV-2.”

Paragraph 3, Line 4: Yes authors mean with developing immunodeficiency as incorporated in the introduction, Paragraph 2, second last line

Last sentence: Added In the present study in last sentence of the introduction

**Methods:**
Reference [19] Betolli et al available under. Infants’ tests: to support the categorization of the time of the infants’ infection

**Results**
Pointed out in the discussion that HIV-2 gp 36 PCR should have been done to confirm HIV-2 infection, see discussion section paragraph 2 line 5

Statement corrected to read, *There were two stillbirths, one among the HIV-1 positive and the other within the HIV negative group. These two were excluded from analysis.* See paragraph 2 lines 1-2.

Pages 9 -10: The sentence corrected.

Page 11, “Reactions” replaced with reactivity.

**Discussion:**
Emphasised the value of WB as suggested, see last paragraph, last 5 lines

Conclusion
Added the word “skilled” to the first sentence paragraph 1 to make it more correct

**Grammatical Errors**
Introduction Line 5: the world’s corrected

Page 2, Last line: Corrected to read “without distinguishing antibody to individual antigens.” as suggested.

Original sentence fragmented to read as: “This is a nested, case-control study where the cases and controls were sampled from a cohort of pregnant women attending 3 antenatal clinics, all around the city of Harare, Zimbabwe. All were being studies for Prevention of
Mother-To-Child Transmission (PMTCT) and were naive to antiretroviral therapy.” as suggested.

Possessive punctuations inserted as proposed.

Correct verb form used with “Criteria and data.”

Ninety-three percent of the women were married and 90% had at least one child statement corrected accordingly.

**Results**
Paragraph1, last line: “formerly employed” corrected to read “formally employed”

“Compared to” corrected to read “compared with”

Inserted a comma before “Respectively” as suggested

Statistically significant” deleted where it was redundant

Page 9 second paragraph: after 9 months post partum. “After” deleted.

Page 10, end of 1st paragraph: “chronic HIV-1 positive infection” corrected to read “chronic HIV-1 infection”

**Discussion,**
Paragraph 2 first sentence: “that“ deleted.

Thank you for all the comment and corrections. We hereby resubmit the article to your journal only. The revised manuscript has been reviewed and approved by co-authors. We hope the revised manuscript is now suitable for publication in your journal.

Thank you

Yours sincerely

Kerina Duri