Reviewer's report

Title: Recall of intestinal helminthiasis by HIV-1-infected South Africans and rationalisation as to why analysis of possible consequences of worm/HIV co-infection should not be based mainly on excretion of helminth eggs: a questionnaire-based study

Version: 1 Date: 27 March 2006

Reviewer: Janette Bradley

Reviewer's report:

General
I found this a very difficult paper to read the abstract gives the impression that the study was about a large scale investigation on the interactions of helminth infections and HIV. However, the experimental part of the study presents the findings of a questionnaire designed to address the ability of people to recall infections with GI helminths. There appeared to be a connection with HIV positivity and the number of people able to recall having had worm infections. It is possible that there is some behavioural or sociological reason where HIV status and helminth infection may be linked but there is very little discussion about this. The authors however extend the paper to discuss the interesting possibility that faecal egg counts may not be a valid method for determining helminth infection status in HIV positive patients. They hypothesise that Th2 responses will be higher in HIV positive patients and thus such individuals will have more resistance to nematode infections. This is an interesting hypothesis but it seems to be totally disconnected from the actual study findings which I do not think merit a full paper but would be more appropriate as a brief communication. The interesting discussion about interactions with the immune system would be more appropriate as a review or opinion paper and should be removed from the basic study

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)