Reviewer's report

Title: The HIV/AIDS epidemic in Cuba: Why a low prevalence?

Version: 1 Date: 28 June 2007

Reviewer: Viviane Bremer

Reviewer's report:

Please number your comments and divide them into

- Major Compulsory Revisions

The author must respond to these before a decision on publication can be reached. For example, additional necessary experiments or controls, statistical mistakes, errors in interpretation.

The paper does so much give answers on why the prevalence is low, but is confirming that the prevalence is low and that the coverage is relatively high. It emphasises the role of extensive testing in a context of available ART. Therefore I am questioning myself whether the title is appropriate. The results do not provide answers and only limited hypotheses on the “why” but more on “how many”. This should be addressed in the title and the abstract.

In the discussion you should also discuss that though the prevalence may be low this might quickly change in the future. The trend is rather worrying. MSM are driving the epidemics and seem to serve as bridge population for women. You should try to compare this situation with countries with other or similar epidemic trends.

- Minor Essential Revisions

The author can be trusted to make these. For example, missing labels on figures, the wrong use of a term, spelling mistakes.

Abstract:

Please provide concrete numbers in the results section, for example the increase from x to y. Give the numbers as prevalence per 10,000 population. Give the percentage of women who had sex with MSM in the abstract.

Introduction:

The sentences “Estimated national adult…. by heterosexual intercourse” have been repeated in the third paragraph. Please remove one. These sentences would also be better placed in the very first paragraph.
Methods:
Could you provide more details on the interviews performed on the newly detected HIV infections? Who does the interview? Is there a standardised questionnaire? Is anonymity preserved? This could influence the type of answers received.

Results:
You could simplify the text of your result, for ex. in the 3rd paragraph: A total of 140 of 175 (80.0%) cases…
Give the numbers as prevalence per 10,000 population. Add this also in the figures.
5th paragraph: the female to male ratio is among the newly diagnosed or all?

- Discretionary Revisions
These are recommendations for improvement which the author can choose to ignore. For example clarifications, data that would be useful but not essential.

Please note that both the comments entered here and answers to the questions below constitute the report, bearing your name, that will be forwarded to the authors and published on the site if the article is accepted.

What next?
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Based on your assessment of the validity of the manuscript, what do you advise should be the next step?
- Accept after minor essential revisions (which the authors can be trusted to make)

Level of interest
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BMC Infectious Diseases has a policy of publishing all scientifically sound research whatever its level of interest. However if you choose one of the first three categories below, we may ask the authors if they would like the manuscript considered instead for the more selective journal BMC Medicine.
- An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English
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Very good
As we do not charge for access to published research, we cannot undertake the
costs of editing. If the language is a serious impediment to understanding, you should choose the first option below, and we will ask the authors to seek help. If the language is generally acceptable but has specific problems, some or all of which you have noted, choose the second option.

- Acceptable

Statistical review
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Is it essential that this manuscript be seen by an expert statistician?

If you feel that the manuscript needs to be seen by a statistician, but are unable to assess it yourself then please could you suggest alternative experts in your confidential comments to the editors.

- Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

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