Reviewer's report

Title: Characteristics and management of HIV-1-infected pregnant women enrolled in a randomised trial: differences between Europe and the USA

Version: 1  Date: 13 January 2007

Reviewer: John Ziegler

Reviewer's report:

TRIVIAL:
Background, line 10, Reference 14 (now) contains 2004, not 2003 USA data.

MINOR:
The trial from which the data have been derived commenced 10 years ago. There are therefore questions about the current applicability of the findings. In respect of this, in the discussion the authors say "Today, most identified HIV-infected women of child-bearing age are most likely diagnosed either as a result of antenatal testing or through more targeted testing of specific risk groups, ..." but don't discuss other time-related changes which have or may have occurred with respect to epidemiology, public health or clinical practices, obstetric history, incidence of STIs and clinical features etc. that might impact on the observations.

MAJOR:
Nevertheless it is not altogether surprising that differences such as those reported here might occur across continents. What the authors have not made clear is how these observations add to our understanding of the epidemic, natural history, pathogenesis or on optimal management.

The transmission rates in Europe and USA were not significantly different. The authors appear to suggest that the differences they report had no impact on transmission rate. It is however possible that some of the different features in the two populations induced effects on transmission which balanced each out, for example that the possible lower transmission rate associated with elective caesarean section and HAART in USA might have compensated for the higher viral loads and higher rate of STIs. Perhaps the authors might be able to conduct further subgroup analysis to address this possibility.

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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.