Reviewer's report

Title: immunological predictors of CD4+ T cell decline in antiretroviral treatment interruptions

Version: 1 Date: 11 October 2007

Reviewer: Daniel Skiest

Reviewer's report:

General
This is a small prospective study of treatment interruption in HIV-infected individuals. The small numbers preclude any significant conclusions based on this study.

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

Methods: second paragraph- How often were clinical parameters e.g. T cells and HIV RNA etc. checked. What were the specific criteria for reintroducing HAART. What clinical events are the authors referring to? AIDS defining events, CDC category B events. Did they include non AIDS related conditions e.g. renal, liver, cardiac events?

Results- first paragraph- How did the authors define thrombocytopenia e.g. what platelet count?
second paragraph- fourth line- There appears to be a typographical error. What was the percent < 500/uL?
Last sentence of second paragraph- How do the VL increases after TI compare to the pre-ART VLs?

Discussion- First sentence- The authors statement that TI poses little if any risk of clinical complications is too broad based on their very limited study. Other studies e.g. SMART and others have shown that there may be complications with TI.

Second paragraph- Where is the data showing a positive association with starting HAART and subsequent HIV RNA load?
First paragraph page 11- While LPR to PPD may have been predictive of outcome in this small number of patients it is premature to conclude that it is clinically useful for selection of patients to discontinue HAAART. The authors have not shown it to be predictive in a multivariate analysis, it is not clinically available and it is not practical. At most they can suggest further studies to look at this as an independent predictor.

The authors should include a discussion of limitations of this study.
Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

There are problems with the use of English and grammatical errors.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

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: Needs some language corrections before being published

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.