Reviewer’s report

Title: The effect of mode of delivery on HIV-1 disease progression and mortality in a Kenyan cohort

Version: 3 Date: 6 June 2014

Reviewer: Marcus Rijken

Reviewer’s report:

Thank you for letting me re-review the manuscript.

The authors have improved the manuscript by including some more available information. However, this study has a high risk of attributing risks to confounding factors, such as surgery related factors, pre-health status, socio economic factors, smoking, antenatal care visits etc. This is due to the nature of the study (retrospective design, the study was not designed to examine the mode of delivery as a factor of disease progression, incomplete data, differences between the study groups, data from the pre-HAART era).

The authors have included these limitations in the discussion paragraph.

In particular, the incomplete data around the CS (limited data on reasons, method, anesthesia, complications during or after surgery, blood loss etc) and VD (blood loss, use of ventouse or forceps etc) make the observations not very strong. In addition, the finding that the increased rate of mortality was not related with HIV progression markers, raise the feeling that other confounding factors may have played a role.

As a minor concern, I am afraid that some readers may conclude from the observations of this study that the best clinical method for delivery in HIV women may be scheduled CS, as this group had the lowest rate of maternal deaths.

Therefore, I suggest that when the editors decide to accept this study for publication, they may ask the authors to try to find more clinical relevant data (if available) in order to minimize the risk of confounding factors.

And they may ask to include some lines in the discussion paragraph about whether the observations in this study may be strong enough or not to chance clinical practices regarding the mode of delivery.

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.