Reviewer's report

Title: Screening for cervical cancer in HIV-positive women in northern Italy: a population-based, cross-sectional study

Version: 2 Date: 26 November 2009

Reviewer: Abraham Peedicayil

Reviewer's report:

This is a cross sectional study in which a self-administered questionnaire was used to determine the use of Pap smears in HIV positive women in the Emilia Romagna region in Northern Italy. The aim was to see if the use of Pap smears in HIV positive women had improved over time. The title is a little misleading as the paper is mainly a survey of Pap smear use and not screening for cervical cancer.

Major revisions:
1. Details of Emilia Romagna have to be provided in the methods section such as area, population, number of HIV women.
2. Only 1108 women attending the infectious disease clinics were invited to participate. Almost a third of the HIV positive women in this region were excluded. Did these women receive any care at all and in what ways were they different from the actual population studied?
3. Without breaking confidentiality, triangulation to validate the Pap smear use needs to be done.
4. P values and confidence intervals need to be provided for all statistical tests. Even for results not presented in the tables, these details should be provided in the text.
5. Details of multivariate models and the results from this analysis should be provided.
6. Improvement of Pap smear use over time is difficult to assess when there is no baseline publication. We do not know if the same methodology was used.

Minor revisions:
1. Are there cervical cancer screening and treatment guidelines in Italy?
2. What were the median number of Pap smears in these women?
3. How many of them had HPV testing, colposcopy, surgical procedures?
4. Check style and grammar.
5. The discussion should refer to similar studies from other countries or regions.
6. The discussion should refer to problems in the system, compliance of patients and ways to improve
Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests: I declare that I have no competing interests