Author's response to reviews

Title: HIV and pre-neoplastic and neoplastic lesions of the cervix in South Africa: a case-control study

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Re: Re-submission of paper

On behalf of my co-authors, I submit the revised manuscript “The relationship between HIV and pre-neoplastic and neoplastic lesions of the cervix in South Africa: a case-control study.” A point–by-point response to the reviewer’s comments is provided below.

Reviewer: Gary M Clifford
Reviewer's report:
Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
Please refer to "high-risk HPV" and not just "HPV" throughout the text and tables.
This clarity is of particular importance since the inclusion of the new table 3. This table appears to show that HIV increases the risk of SIL among HPV NEGATIVE women, by an odds ratio of 6.5. This of course, is not true - many low-risk HPV types can cause SIL, especially in HIV-positive women, which likely explains the OR.

HPV changed to high-risk HPV (HR-HPV) throughout tables and text.
Reviewer: Denise Jamieson
Reviewer's report:
General
The authors have adequately addressed all of my comments.

Reviewer: Stephen E Hawes
Reviewer's report:
Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
Within the new results section regarding Table 1, some of the information is incorrect. Cases were LESS likely to have a history of hormonal contraception. Please double check all of the new data.
Table 1 checked and corrections made.

There are many typos throughout:
In abstract, the OR for cervical cancer had extra spaces in it.
Space removed

On page 8, double commas
Corrected

Line spacing in results section is inconsistent.
Corrected

Table 1: ) missing with regards to divorces/separated
>= 16 years for sexual debut (not 6)
P-values should be <0.001, as 0.000 is not appropriate.
Asterisk should be added to P-value column heading
Correction to Table 1 made

Add significant digits to percentages (ex. 82.0 for HSIL HIV-)
Corrected

Consistency between use of ',' and '.' for decimal places in Tables 2 and 3.
Checked and corrected

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
Perhaps in Table 2, you could add a row for the HIV info and odds ratio for invasive cervical cancer, as I believe that is one of your main study findings. I understand that it gets complicated for where to put the adjusted OR, since you have a different reference category. Perhaps another column for the Adjusted OR, showing the combined reference group of all Normal through HSIL, would work.

We feel that it will be confusing to add the information on the association between HIV and invasive to Table 2, given that the reference groups are different. We also feel it would be better include the information on the association between invasive cancer and
HIV in the text (as we have done) rather than in a separate table, as the new additional table would then have just 2 rows.

**Changes suggested by editorial team**

*Title page- Please remove the heading 'Full title' from the title page.
Funding- Please remove the funding information from page 3, funding details should be included under the Acknowledgements section.
Page 5- Please remove the abstract word count.
Keywords- Please remove the keyword section.
Conclusions- Please include a brief Conclusions section after the Discussion.
Competing interests- Please place this section after the Conclusions.
Author’s contribution- Please rename this section Authors’ contributions.
References- Please list all of the authors in the reference list and avoid the use of the suffix et al.*

All the above changes have been made.

Yours sincerely

Dr J Moodley