Reviewer's report

Title: Utility of clinical parameters to identify HIV infection in infants below ten weeks of age in South Africa: a prospective cohort study

Version: 1 Date: 16 June 2011

Reviewer: Kebede Deribe

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General: the study identifies clinical parameters to identify HIV infection in infants below ten weeks of age. The finding helps in producing efficient clinical algorithm to be used in program setups. However the result of the study should be interpreted cautiously: it was conducted in areas where the prevalence of BF is very low, the clinicians were aware of the HIV status of the infants and severely ill children were excluded. These limit significantly the application of the algorithm in setups in developing countries. The validation of the study in different setups should be highlighted boldly.

Specific comments

• Abbreviations should be spelled out in first appearance eg PMTCT.
• The conclusion should include the term in similar setup rather than saying resource-constrained settings. The assertion made should consider the HIV prevalence, the selection criteria of participants (severely ill were excluded) the prevalence of breast feeding is very low (12%).
• The fourth page should start with title introduction.
• The introduction should include review of previous works and should include methodological shortcoming of the previous studies. How the current study overcome the limitations in the previous studies. The added value of the current study compared to previous similar works should be explicitly indicated.

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests