Reviewer's report

Title: A comparative outcome of morbidity and mortality in HIV exposed uninfected children compared to HIV infected or HIV unexposed children undergoing surgery: a cohort study

Version: 1 Date: 2 December 2010

Reviewer: Louise Kuhn

Reviewer's report:

The study reports an interesting association.

The title should be improved currently too cumbersome and dull.

Age matching is an unusual approach to adjust for confounding by age and may be inefficient. It would be helpful to know if the results using more common approaches like (1) stratification and (2) adjustment in multivariate analysis produces similar results.

It is disturbing that in a place like Cape Town with high levels of poverty in the communities affected by HIV that breastfeeding rates in the HIVe group are low. This is not clearly reported in the results but is mentioned in the discussion as a possible explanation for the poor outcomes in the HIVe group. The data pertaining to this should be presented.

The hyphen, I believe, is still used in modern English. Hyphens are missing throughout e.g. HIV-exposed, post-operative, age-definitive … etc.

Please use the abbreviations chosen consistently throughout.

The sample size in the HIVe group is very small.

Discussion is at a quite a high level of generality and offers little new insight into what the reasons for these risks in the HIVe group are attributable to. Simply listing all possible explanations is not very helpful.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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

Declaration of competing interests:

I have no competing interests.