Reviewer’s report

Title: Excellent outcomes among HIV+ children on ART, but unacceptably high pre-ART mortality and losses to follow-up: a cohort study from Cambodia

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Reviewer: Stephane Blanche

Reviewer’s report:

The paper demonstrate a very high mortality or loss to follow up in a cambodgian cohort of HIV-1 infected children not treated by HAART, in sharp contrast of what it is observed in treated children. Authors must be congratulated for their efforts to evaluate a field action despite the burden of their work.

The proposal to analyse the cohort as a whole, including non treated children is excellent. It is reminiscent of what is done in controlled trials using the “intention to treat” concept, rather than “under treatment” sub group patients.

Doing this, authors must give a detailed description for which reasons treatment was not proposed, rather than an obvious difference in mortality. A multivariate analysis of parameters associated to non treatment is lacking.

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined? No, missing the main question to my point of view
2. Are the methods appropriate and well described? No, see 1
3. Are the data sound? Yes but incomplete
4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition? yes
5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data? Not completely
6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated? no
7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished? yes
8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found? yes
9. Is the writing acceptable? yes