Reviewer’s report

Title: Same-Visit HIV Testing in Trinidad and Tobago

Version: 3 Date: 21 September 2009

Reviewer: Benjamin Chi

Reviewer’s report:

MAJOR COMPULSORY REVISIONS

Thank you for the opportunity to review the revision of this manuscript. In looking over their response, the authors have made few revisions based on the comments provided. Again, my concerns about this paper are:

1. The authors emphasize that the “subject of this manuscript is the policy process” (response to point 1) and make an argument as to why contributions about policy development are needed from the region. Perhaps a better description of the scope of their objectives should be included in the paper. In what appears to be the thesis statement for the manuscript (p. 4, second to last paragraph), the authors write: “This report summarizes experiences from one country, Trinidad and Tobago (TT) with implementation of effective national policy for HIV testing using rapid test technology.” They then follow with topics that extend beyond the scope of policy process, including pilot program outcomes and cost analyses. If program evaluation and implementation are not within the scope of the paper - as they indicate in their response - then why are these included in such detail? The authors should either extend the paper to address the concerns previously raised (and address points 2 and 3), or they should cut this implementation/evaluation component out of the paper completely and focus only on TT’s policy development.

2. When the authors describe this program as a model for other small countries (in abstract and conclusions), are they describing the policy process or the impact of implementation? If TT is a model for policy development in HIV testing, it would also be useful to detail how this particular decision-making process was different from typical approaches (i.e. why it’s a model). If TT’s experience is a model for HIV testing implementation, I believe more data is needed to substantiate this claim (again, points 2 and 3 in my previous review). As I stated in my previous review, if long-term data is not available, the authors should address this as a limitation to their program description and proceed more cautiously with their conclusions.

3. The authors reference their Appendix A in response to comments 5-8. The questions that I raised are critical to policy development and should be included in the manuscript: (1) public health benefits for same-day testing, (2) experiences from other programs, (3) algorithms for same-day testing, and (4) quality of testing. These core issues should not relegated to appendices that may not be
available or simply may not be read. That the guidelines for "Correspondences" does not allow for more than 10 references is not adequate justification for these omissions. If the journal is not flexible with respect to these guidelines, perhaps another article type should be considered.

MINOR ESSENTIAL REVISION

1. My recommendation about Table 1 was not addressed.

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests