Reviewer's report

Title: Prevalence and barriers to HIV testing among mothers at a tertiary care hospital in Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Version: 1 Date: 20 November 2009

Reviewer: Anna Coutsoudis

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This manuscript describes a cross-sectional survey designed to assess the prevalence of HIV testing in women who delivered at a maternal and child care hospital in Cambodia. The survey also collected data on factors that could be possible barriers to women accepting HIV testing. The question is clear and the investigators have used appropriate methods as well as appropriate statistical analysis of the data. The discussion and conclusions are adequately supported by the data. The findings are not unexpected but are important as they underlie what many studies have reported previously, namely the importance of quality counseling and the importance of involving partners and families in the fight against HIV. The study is a small local study with obvious limitations which have been documented.

Major compulsory revisions:

Methods:
Need to mention when exactly the interviews conducted – on the day of delivery?? – how long do women stay in hospital for a normal vaginal delivery?
Need to mention the reasons for not offering counseling and testing to women in the study after they reported not being tested – discuss the ethical considerations.
Was there a reason for conducting the survey in the last quarter of the year? Is there perhaps anything different about the last quarter eg is it holiday time are there fewer staff etc?

Discussion:
Page 10, limitations, include what percentage of mothers deliver at home.

Table 1:
Question 1 – inconstantly needs to be rephrased to “does not use a condom consistently”
Question 6 is the same as question 5 – did you mean to say during “delivery”?

Minor essential revisions:

There are several places where the text needs general grammatical editing – I will only highlight a few of them without making suggestions of editing and the
more serious ones I will provide my suggested editing.

Sections that need editing:
Introduction – sentence 2 and sentence 3 of paragraph 2.

Suggestions for editing:
Page 6 – suggest you say “were” tested or “received” testing rather than “got” tested.

Page 9 – suggest you amend para 2 as follows:
It is stated in the guidelines on PITC ..........and tools to prevent HIV transmission to others (19). However WHO/UNAIDS have reduced the emphasis on counseling in their revised testing guidelines eliminating the pre-test counseling, we are therefore concerned that in the PITC strategy many mothers may be tested without obtaining basic knowledge of HIV prevention and care through counseling.

Page 9 paragraph three, third sentence – suggest change as follows:
Nevertheless HIV testing and counseling services are not as available out of Phnom Penh as they are within the city.

Page 9, paragraph 3, fifth sentence – suggest change as follows:
In addition, laboratory services ......., because the Cambodian regulations allow only laboratory technicians, to provide HIV testing and these technicians are not allocated to all health facilities in rural areas (21).

Page 10, sentence 3 – Although the study ......information on the prevalence of HIV testing and highlighted barriers .................

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**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.