Reviewer's report

Title: What happens to ART-eligible patients who do not start ART? Dropout between screening and ART initiation: a cohort study in Karonga, Malawi

Version: 2 Date: 25 August 2010

Reviewer: Benson Droti

Reviewer's report:

Title: What happens to ART-eligible patients who do not start ART? Dropout between screening and ART initiation: a cohort study in Karonga, Malawi

I am comfortable with the adjustments the authors have made in the introduction, methods and the results. I am however not comfortable with the conclusion of this paper. The conclusion is not at all related to the findings of this paper.

If a conclusion is based on the findings of your study, it defeats my understanding how another person’s work comes into your conclusion. You can use other people’s work (and acknowledge this) in the introduction, methods and discussions. I think it is inappropriate (it just does not make any sense at all) to use other people’s work in the results and the conclusions. A conclusion is like stating an informed opinion based on the findings of your study. Although the authors stated in the cover letter that this has been corrected, I still see references 14 and 15 in the conclusion and I do not see the logic behind this.

BMC should make the final decision on this, but I think the authors need to write this conclusion again. To me, a conclusion is a key component of a paper and it is therefore self defeating if the authors cannot draw an appropriate conclusion from their own work.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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 interest