Reviewer's report

Title: Trends in HIV infection surveillance among men who have sex with men in Norway, 1995-2009

Version: 2 Date: 29 October 2012

Reviewer: Asuncion Diaz

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Title: Trends in HIV infection surveillance among men who have sex with men in Norway, 1995-2009

This manuscript provides a description of HIV cases among men who have sex with men (MSM) notified to the surveillance system in Norway from 1995 to 2009, and evaluates trends of HIV infection during the study period.

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
Yes. The authors explain the objective of the manuscript in the final paragraph of the background section.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
Yes, although some aspects need to be reviewed (see comments below).

3. Are the data sound?
Yes, although some aspects need to be reviewed (see comments below).

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
Yes. Nevertheless, some aspects need to be reviewed (see comments below).

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
Yes. Nevertheless, some aspects need to be reviewed (see comments below).

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
Yes.

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 Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?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?
In my opinion, it is. However, I am not a native English speaker.

Major Compulsory Revisions:

1. Methods:

• Page 6, 2nd paragraph:

I would suggest moving the sentence “At NIPH, a date of infection is individually estimated from laboratory results, previous negative tests and patient’s information” before the second paragraph in page 7 (“When presenting the cases by the year in which they were most likely infected...”).

• Page 7, 2nd paragraph:

- What is the difference between “possible” and “probable” time of infection?. In both categories time of infection is less than 3 years. Please, provide criteria to classify cases as “possible”.

- More details should be given on how the date of infection is calculated when a past HIV-negative test is available. Is the date of infection the midpoint between the date of diagnosis and the date of past negative test?.

- “The past negative HIV test” is the same as “the last negative HIV test”?

2. Results:

• Page 7, 1st paragraph:

- Please present median age with the 25th and 75th percentiles

- What does “men on temporary visit” mean?

• Page 8, 6th paragraph:

“We observed a significant increase among syphilis co-infected MSM (p for trend=0.001) ...”. Please, provide some figures and percentages

3. Discussion:

• Page 11, 3th paragraph:

I suggest to change the sentence “Similar to our findings, 11% of HIV positive MSM had an STI co-infection in Belgium [9] and 15.4% in Amsterdam STI clinic [11], but as much as 31% in Spain in the period 2003-2007 [13]” for the following:

“Similar to our findings, 11% of HIV positive MSM had an STI co-infection in Belgium [9] and 15.4% in Amsterdam STI clinic [11], but as much as 31% in
Spain in the period 2003-2007; nevertheless the Spanish data are not derived from a universal surveillance system but from a network of STI clinics[13].

- Page 13, 1st paragraph:
Could you, please, clarify the meaning of the sentence “We did not identify a large discrepancy between the year of infection and the year of diagnosis…”.  

- Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

1. Methods:

- Page 6, 3th and 4th paragraph:
I suggest re-order this section. My suggestion would be to put the 3th and 4th paragraph (data analysis) at the end of the methods section.

2. Reference List:
There is an erratum in the reference number 3.

3. Table.
I suggest to include a column with the description of cases diagnosed from 1995-2003.

4. Figures
- To be consistent with the rest of the manuscript, I would suggest writing “men who have sex with men” instead of “cases with homosexually acquired HIV infection” in the figures legends.

Discretionary Revisions:

1. Background:
Could you provide some information about HIV infection in Norway by mechanism of transmission?. This could help the reader to understand the importance of MSM in the HIV epidemic in Norway.

**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