Reviewer’s report

Title: Predictors of loss to follow-up before HIV treatment initiation in Northwest Ethiopia: a case control study

Version: 3 Date: 15 March 2013

Reviewer: Bakhao Ndiaye

Reviewer’s report:

In this manuscript Ahmed et al, examine the predictive factors of loss to follow-up (LTFU) in one clinic in Northern Ethiopia. Their findings are of utility to HIV clinicians and other care providers in similar settings. The manuscript is well-written and easy to follow.

For the sake of accuracy, major and minor corrections listed below need to be addressed however.

Majors
1. It is not clear how the authors dealt with patients who only showed up for a single visit. How frequent was this scenario?
2. The authors did not mention LTFU patients’ outcome who came back or died subsequently. Were they taken into account in the analysis? Was an active research (through the medical chart, through access to the family, medical centers or death registers) ever conducted, especially for patients at a late stage at enrolment (CD4<200 or or clinically-defined AIDS)?
3. How do they explain the large number of patients who must receive treatment? (CD4 <200, for example)
4. Were interactions studied?

Minor
1. Explain how the data was collected. Retrospective or prospective?
2. In the method section, add a definition paragraph
3. add a figure definition of LTFU (see article: Incidence rate and risk factors for loss to follow-up in HIV-infected patients from five French clinical centres in Northern France - January 1997 to December 2006.)
4. How do you explain the difference between the total number of patients included 1817 (fig 1) and the one presented in the tables
5. Explain how the data was collected. Retrospective or prospective?
6. In the discussion: discuss the limitations of the study further (e.g. the fact that the results may not be extrapolated to other regions)
7. Indicate continuation when a table spans more than one page
8. Check variable Next appointment record: 2 categories and 3 lines of
9. The presentation of data needs to be clarified (same numbers in univariate and multivariate analysis?)

10. May need to better explore how interventions work among these groups of people. The authors have experience with this group of patients and thus might be able to discuss ways to reach the patients in the groups most at risk of LTFU.

**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 interests