Reviewer's report

Title: Missing HIV prevention opportunities in South African children - A 7-year review

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Reviewer: Atana U. Ewa

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REVIEWER’S RE-REVIEW OF MANUSCRIPT TITLED:
Missing HIV Prevention Opportunities In South African Children - A 7-Year Review
Authors:
Ute D Feucht
Anell Meyer
Mariana Kruger

I have noted the corrections and changes made but the argument for maintaining Abstract line 20 does not hold. These are the author’s comments:

“In line 20 the reviewer suggested to change the sentence to “The study objective was to identify missed opportunities for prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV using the four PMTCT stages outlined in National Guidelines.” The timing of HIV acquisition in our study cohort cannot be absolutely defined due to the retrospective data collection, and the cohort potentially includes children infected through breastfeeding. We therefore argue that the wording “perinatal HIV transmission” in our initial manuscript is an accurate term used in the context and have left it unchanged.”

It is rather because the timing of HIV acquisition in the subjects cannot be absolutely defined that the terminology “mother to child transmission” should be used. It gives a better coverage and a wider period of exposure than the “perinatal period.” I believe the perinatal period has a time span before and beyond which some of the studied children could have been exposed to the virus. The use of the terminology “perinatal HIV transmission” has automatically excluded exposure to the virus before the 28th week of gestation and after the first week of life; whereas “mother to child transmission of HIV” takes into cognisance exposure to the virus from the first day of pregnancy to the last day of breastfeeding, which is what the study is about.

Please this issue should not be subjected to arguments and should be changed if this paper is to meet international standards.

I rest my case and leave the final decision to the editors. I hope I don’t have to re-review this manuscript again.
Thank you once again and best regards,

Dr Atana U. Ewa