Reviewer's report

Title: Health and socioeconomic impact of HIV/AIDS on South African households: cohort study

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Reviewer: Prof Tony Barnett

Level of interest: A paper whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Advice on publication: Accept after discretionary revisions

a) Discretionary revisions

It would be very helpful if the article could address exactly what is meant by socio-economic capacity (p. 3). Herein lies a theoretical, conceptual and analytical design limitation. This paper focuses on the economic and almost entirely excludes the social. Thus we have no insights into the role of social relations beyond the household in responding to the epidemic's effects. Households are described as "unaffected" and it may be questionable whether any are. Ideas such as social capital, social cohesion &c might be of use here. The Carletonville study tries to take account of these aspects by locating the households in their community. These problems are common to household studies but such studies could include more social variables - for example memberships in formal and non-formal organisations, relations with wider kin &c.

b) Compulsory revisions

None

Competing interests:

None declared.