Reviewer's report

Title: Endemic cryptosporidiosis and exposure to municipal tap water in persons with acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS): A case-control study

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Version: 1 Date: 21 Nov 2002

Reviewer: Prof Christopher K Fairley

Level of interest: A paper of considerable general medical or scientific interest

Advice on publication: Accept after discretionary revisions

This is a well written paper describing an important area. It is unlikely that this sort of work will be repeated easily because of the dramatic fall in opportunistic infections recently.

Discretionary comments

1. The paper is long and could be shortened without losing content. For example the abstract should contain principally results and not have a long background. I would suggest the crude odds ratio be put in the abstract.

2. It would be useful if the authors made some comment in the discussion about other evidence that would support the findings in their study. For example a more detailed description of the water catchment, whether cryptosporidium oocysts are commonly detected or not and whether the area has had prior epidemics of cryptosporidium.

3. I think the OR of 23 is overstated - it almost has a ring of - this is too high to believe - and may raise concern about the logistic regression method. It is a composite variable - and it may be better to present the non composite ones in the abstract with the odds ratio of 7.

4. More should be made of the fact that information was not available on tap water treatment within the home. It is possible that patients boiled all water, or had effective filters at home which would make the results less plausible. There should be some data on the proportion of patients with AIDS who filter their water?. I'd also suggest it is explained why the study was not designed to assess these in home treatments (see para one methods).

5. The study needs a sample size calculation.

Competing interests:

None declared.