Reviewer’s report

Title: Highly Active Antiretroviral Treatment and Health Related Quality of Life in South African adults with Human Immunodeficiency Virus infection: A cross-sectional analytical study.

Version: 3 Date: 17 April 2007

Reviewer: Barbara Martin

Reviewer’s report:

General

This is a nice manuscript providing cross-sectional HRQoL measurements of people receiving or awaiting HAART in South Africa. The authors interpret these findings as promising but rightly point out that longitudinal studies are needed to evaluate changes in individuals’ HRQoL, and that unavailable clinical data could confound these results.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

1. The largest potential for bias would seem to come from the fact that some of the HAART users were previous users and were preferentially given HAART at the start of the program to avoid treatment interruptions. These people had a longer period of time from which to potentially benefit from HAART. It would seem that secondary analyses excluding these participants would be warranted to ensure that they do not unduly influence the results.
2. In table 1, HAART status is given by demographics. If a second table was added giving total EQ-5D scores and VAS scores by demographics, it would allow readers to have some idea of factors that might be potential confounders. The authors appear to have appropriately checked for confounding and kept/deleted covariates, but the above table would support what they did.
3. In table 2 (or a similar table), VAS scores could be provided by HAART status. As it is, VAS score results are only presented in a multivariate model.

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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. Spell out PHC (acronym used on p. 5)
2. ART used instead of HAART on p. 11
3. Change “not needing” a physical caregiver to “who did not have” on p. 12, as it confuses need for a caregiver with simply whether one is present
4. Explain what is meant by “we compared patients rather than described changes within patients” on p. 12 and why this might account for the difference from the Khayelitsha study

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

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.