Reviewer’s report

Title: Physical and emotional health outcomes after 12 months of public-sector ART in the Free State province of South Africa: a longitudinal study using structural equation modelling

Version: 1 Date: 23 October 2008

Reviewer: Nigel Livesley

Reviewer’s report:

• 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. The title and abstract mentions outcomes after 12 months of ART but last paragraph in the background states it looks at 6 months follow up and the last paragraph in the Data collection section states 6-12 months. I think it is months 6-12 but am unsure.
  2. Are the findings described in the Sample Description section from the period 6-12 m or a composite of both time periods? The comparison between findings in months 0-6 and 6-12 could be clearer. I would suggest a table showing the scores on the dimensions of QoL and adverse events in both time periods.
  3. The median times on ART for each time period would also be helpful especially for interpreting the baseline data. There is a huge difference between months 1-2 on ART and months 5-6. Therefore understanding when the baseline data were collected would be important. This could also go in the suggested table.
  4. Adverse events decreased over time. The paper states that was due to drug substitution and symptomatic management but provides no data on this. How many people had their drugs substituted? What were the key symptomatic interventions?
  5. Sample description - typo " pain of discomfort" should be ' pain or discomfort'

• Discretionary Revisions (which are recommendations for improvement but which the author can choose to ignore)
  1. Adverse events are a focus of the paper but the drugs used are not mentioned. They are in the previous papers on this cohort but it would be helpful to include that data here.
  2. What were the most common disruptive adverse events? (it is surprising that painful feet are not on the list of common adverse events – did they make up a sizable proportion of the disruptive adverse events?)

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being
Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.