Reviewer's report

Title: Characteristics of HIV Seroprevalence of Visitors to Public Health Centers Under the National HIV Surveillance System in Korea: Cross Sectional study

Version: 2 Date: 6 January 2009

Reviewer: Sarah Dougan

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for your clarifications and changes made to the last set of comments. There are still, I think, some changes that could be made to improve the paper.

MAJOR COMPULSORY REVISIONS

1. Discussion & main message
I still think the discussion still requires more work, particularly around the arguments presented and the structure as I found it quite difficult to follow. I don't know if the structure that the BMJ proposes for discussions would be helpful in this: http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/318/7193/1224. It also wasn't clear to me what are the key findings and main message from the study.

2. Clarity around what is being measured
I had not realised until this revision of the paper, that only 19% of all HIV tests in Korea are undertaken in PHCs. This is now mentioned in the first few sentences of the discussion. I think this should be moved from there and emphasised in the introduction to the paper. The aims of the paper should also be amended in line with this, as the study will not give an accurate measure of HIV seroprevalence among HIV testers in Korea if it only includes a fifth of the total testers. This should be made clear in the abstract, the introduction, the discussion and the conclusion. It should also be added as a limitation in the discussion section, and what it does actually represent should also be critically discussed (e.g. is this a measure of HIV seroprevalence among susceptible and low-income individuals who haven't dropped out of the system because they know they are HIV+? If so, what does this tell us about HIV epidemiology in Korea?).

MINOR ESSENTIAL REVISIONS

1. Page 8, line 4 - this survey should be referenced.

2. Page 9, lines 4-11 - you should explain what the consequences are for your estimate of HIV seroprevalence because of this.

3. Page 10, lines 3-4 - what is the cause and implications of the reduction of the % of HIV infections being discovered in PHCs given that your study is for 2005 only and not examining trends over time? It would be helpful for readers if you could expand on this point or omit it entirely if appropriate.
DISCRETIONARY REVISIONS

1. I appreciate that it is not easy to write in a second language and I can understand what is being said throughout, but certain parts of the manuscript would benefit from a native English speaker editing it if it is possible to arrange.

2. I think it would be more helpful if the abstract conclusion contained a more definitive key finding and recommendation from the results.

3. Page 9, lines 12-19 - I thought most of the paragraph on TB was superfluous, as I assume most readers of this paper will already have some knowledge of the links between HIV and TB. I would rather see more specific discussions about your results and hypotheses about what might be happening and/or biases in study population etc. to explain your observations.

4. Conclusion, page 10 - I notice that the other reviewer commented on your recommendations for the future of mandatory testing in Korea given UNAIDS/WHO guidance and yours and others findings. While there is now more about this, you still have not made a specific recommendation about this, which may be appropriate?

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

'I declare that I have no competing interests'