Reviewer's report

Title: Association between oral candidiasis and low CD4+ count among HIV positive patients in Hoima Regional Referral Hospital.

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Reviewer: Benedict Seo

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting, well written article that highlights the importance of clinical examination with regards to gauging the disease state and immunosuppression levels in HIV patients.

The authors clearly define the aim of the study which was to determine the prevalence of HIV related oral lesions and their association with CD4+ count in HIV positive patients who had not received prior antiretroviral treatment in Hoima, Uganda.

(Discretionary)

The relationship between HIV infection and related oral lesions (and also CD4+ levels) are more than well described and have been known for some time and there is a question of repetition to a degree. However, the authors justify the uniqueness of this article based on:

1. Insufficient prevalence data in Uganda
2. Resource constraint in Uganda and the need for a simple diagnostic aid

However, with regards to (1):

It seems that the studies they cited give very similar prevalence, (71% vs 72%) and these hardly help in this argument. Authors are suggested to present more studies that show variations in time-dependent and region-specific prevalence. Also of note, the authors later presented prevalence data from studies carried out in different parts of Uganda.

(2): It appeared that the authors were presenting evidence from the literature to support the view, and hence add significance to this study by suggesting that HIV related oral lesions can be used as ‘diagnostic markers’ of immunosuppression without the use of the immunologic monitoring in ‘resource constraint’ environment.

However, statements such as this in fact signifies the importance of clinical/pathologic examination of local lesions that will complement immunologic studies, rather than having a stand alone value. In this regard, continuous use of the term resource constraint should be revised.

It is also of note that numerous acronyms were used in the text. It is suggested
that the authors spell out the terms in full and put the acronym in () for the first time the term is used in the text, and then start using the acronyms.

It is of concern that only clinical parameters were used in the ‘diagnosis’ of oral lesions. Such are clinical provisional diagnoses at most, rather than a definitive histopathologic diagnosis. However the authors pointed this out in full in the text.

(Essential minor)

There were minor typos, most notably the lack of spaces before/after commas, brackets etc.

Overall, this is an interesting article that will benefit the clinicians, pathologists and health managers in the region and I congratulate the authors for their efforts.

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**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