Reviewer's report

Title: Uptake of HIV counselling and testing among pregnant women at different levels of health facilities - experiences from a community-based study in Northern Vietnam.

Version: 7 Date: 26 August 2010

Reviewer: Michael Pearce

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Comment 1

Table 1 is presented as background information. It would be useful to know what proportion of women in each group were positive or negative for each independent variable of interest?which the authors have calculated ORs for?and I encourage the authors to include this data.

In Table 1, two additional columns could be added: one for the number of women in each group which are positive for the outcome variable of interest and the number of women that are negative for the outcome variable of interest. However, this will increase the amount of tabulated data considerably.

With this additional information the reader would be able to make statistical comparisons of proportions if they were interested in doing so. However, I do not think it is necessary for the authors to present any comparative statistics for proportions. If any statistical comparisons of proportions are to be presented, an exact test should be used in preference to a chi-square test although the latter would be acceptable in most cases.

Comment 2

No comment.

Comment 3

The authors appear to have calculated crude ORs using the figures for records giving crude OR and adjusted OR as 1 as the comparator group, although this is not stated explicitly.

It is not clear how the adjusted ORs have been calculated and the footnote does not help in this regard. This certainly needs more explanation. The authors state that adjusted ORs were calculated using all variables under study in Methods, Data analysis. The reader will want to know explicitly what categories have been entered for each additional variable... are they the same as those presented in Table 2?

I agree with Dr Sinha that variable categories must be consistent between text and tables. In this regard, there seem to be inconsistencies between Table 1 and Table 2. Why, for example, under occupation, is there a category of 'no job' in
Table 1, but not in Table 2, and why is there a category of 'housewife/unemployed' in Table 2 but not Table 1.

The presentation of ORs and adjusted ORs in Table 2 needs to be tidied up. On the version I have printed, there are crossed out P-values and missing data for confidence limits.

Comment 4
No comment.

Comment 5
I think Dr Sinha is referring to Table 3, not Table 4. In which case, I agree that the authors have explained their methods adequately. However, there is some confusion in how they have calculated the adjusted OR for time of first ANC visit. The asterisk at the head of the adjusted OR column states that adjusted ORs were calculated by including time of first ANC visit as a variable. This should not be the case when the time of first ANC visit is the dependent variable. This problem could be solved by placing the asterisk against the adjusted OR for the type of HF.

Comment 6
The authors state that adjusted ORs were calculated using all variables under study in Methods, Data analysis. I presume this applies to adjusted ORs in Tables 3 and 4 too. If not, the authors should say so.

One presumes that the independent varaibles in these analyses did not include the dependent variable.

My impression is that the authors have used appropriate statistical techniques. However, I recommend that the authors state explicitly which variables and categories within each variable have been used for each adjusted OR calculation. This could easily be done in an additional table. This will overcome some of the confusion that has occurred over this point.

EDITORIAL RECOMMENDATIONS
1. While I appreciate that DOC files are mutable, these are much easier to review and comment on, and I suggest that for review, DOC files rather than PDF files be made available.

2. I strongly recommend that line numbers as well as page numbers be included in all manuscripts as this makes referencing material much easier and less verbose.