Reviewer’s report

Title: Which health care facilities do adult Malawian antiretroviral therapy patients utilize during intercurrent illness? A cross sectional study

Version: 1 Date: 11 August 2011

Reviewer: Kwasi Torpey

Reviewer's report:

General comments
This paper is very well written. Unfortunately it has serious methodological flaws which is even acknowledged by the authors. These include selection of sample size, sampling etc. These major issues affect the integrity of the paper. Unless they are addressed, this paper cannot be published in its present form

Major compulsory revisions
1. QECH has 12,000 patients on register, 7000 retained and sees 250 patients a day. What is the basis of selecting only 346 patients?
2. Selecting first 10 patients per session will lead to a strong bias and even affect the validity of the results. Being early or late in the clinic may be a function of distance to the clinic and may actually affect utilization during intercurrent illness
3. Utilization of services in particular health facilities depends on the severity of illness and the nearby health facilities. Smaller facilities will be unable to handle complex cases and may affect pattern. Unfortunately the tools were not designed to address this.

Minor Essential Revisions
1. Page 4- Intro Write out QECH in full here. It is first spelt out under the methods
2. Methods: Any specific reason why p value of <0.10 was used but 95% CI?
3. Results: Choice of facility for utilization 57.9% utilizing QECH vs 42.1% using other facilities. Was it statistically significant?
4. Tables: Table 2 should be Table 1 because gives the baseline characteristics

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 I have no competing interest