Reviewer's report

**Title:** Conceptual models for Mental Distress among HIV infected and uninfected: A contribution to clinical practice and research in primary-health-care centers in Zambia

**Version:** 2  **Date:** 10 July 2010

**Reviewer:** Katja Rüdell

**Reviewer's report:**

**Major compulsory revisions**

Review the content of the article and the resulting abstract

Currently the two parts do not entirely match and it is almost as if they were written by two separate authors.

The abstract produces for example numbers on 40% of the HP reporting mental distress to be HIV dependent but there is no elaboration on this in the text. The final conclusions about that treatment decisions are based on EMs are also not substantiated by the data presented as there is no longitudinal data to back up such claims. This is the main problem with the submission.

On the less important side I found the taxonomy confusing based on the text quotations that were provided. The authors grouped the EMs according to social, biological, psychosocial and situational in content but then quote in the psychosocial section an EM that refers to a patient being not able to have children and to have polio as a child - which I would have classed as biological.

Also I cannot foresee that situational aspects are not psychosocial in origin and where is the difference between social and psychosocial?

**Minor essential revisions**

**Introduction first paragraph**

Correctly reference Kleinman as the person who coined the term EM in the introduction in 1980

Refer to assessment of EMs as possible via other methods bar interviews

**Results**

**Health seeking and coping section**

The data presented here is only cross-sectional - patients often try to explain their behaviour or were they ended up in order to make sense of their lives - it is a human trademark. I think we cannot rule out that attributes of the patients EMs have contributed to the treatment response etc but at the same time we do not know how much of this is attributable to it. To believe that all or a large proportion of it are directly associated seems not grounded based on quantitiatve findings of
the literature to me.

Overall
I feel the text is lacking in direction currently
As previously highlighted the abstract to my mind does not match up with the text
and I would like to get a better sense of what is the story that the authors feel is
worth reporting here and how is this backed up by the data that is presented in
the text and also in the tables.

**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 am employed by Pfizer Ltd in Patient Reported Outcomes research. This article
does not make any use of medical treatments specific HIV medication and
therefore I do not feel that there is any financial or otherwise competing interest
as it relates to my expertise in patient models of their illness.