Reviewer's report

Title: Improving data quality and supervision of antiretroviral therapy sites in Malawi: an application of Lot Quality Assurance Sampling

Version: 3 Date: 15 April 2012

Reviewer: Stephanie Topp

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Two Minor Essential Revisions

** Authors should acknowledge that the Hawthorn effect could impact the speed/accuracy of the MOH QA/review team itself - not just the performance of the clinic staff, who they point out were not aware in advance of the study team's arrival. This is important since the paper comments on efficiency and time taken to complete the process and extrapolates from there.

** The authors' addition of the qualification regarding the non-random sampling is noted: 'The extrapolation of these results to the total estimate of time saved and levels of data quality requires the assumption that these clinics are representative of the entire ART program. While sites were not randomly selected, the strategic sampling was done with this aim in mind.'

However (and this is a semantic rather than substantive issue) the addition is unwieldy and difficult to understand. The authors should be clear and explicit as to the nature of this limitation, which goes to the heart of the paper's claims regarding the efficiency of LQAS. Suggest rewording to (or something similar to):

"The extrapolation regarding number of team hours taken to clean data each quarter assumed the same average quality of data across all clinics in Malawi, which given the purposive nature of our sampling may not be the case."

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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 that I have no competing interests