Reviewer's report

Title: Human resources requirements for highly active antiretroviral therapy scale-up in Malawi

Version: 1 Date: 28 June 2007

Reviewer: Alexandra Calmy

Reviewer's report:

General

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Background:
- Add a chapter on the current situation in Malawi (number of ART delivery sites, who provides ART, role of NGO etc) - and assess what is the coverage estimation in 2007.

Method:
- Hirschorn estimation may be subject to debate. Additional scenarios based on the current situation would have been helpful.
- Indeed, the decision not to include Medical Assistant is controversial (they are actually providing ART in some sites). Moreover, HSA have now been involved in drug delivery in health centers.
- Do you have an estimation of vacant position for nurses and other health staff?

Discussion:
- Strategies to cope with Human Resources constraints should be explored in more details: retaining staff is one of these strategies, but effect is unlikely to be at very large scale. The strategies used so far are tasks shifting (re-allocation of task) or the creation of new competency (lay counsellors, experts patients for follow up etc).
- It can probably be assumed that the high mortality rate of health care workers is due to AIDS. Consequently, ART might have an effect on retaining staff at work. Is there any way to measure this?
- The potential benefit of ART in global health (and thus decrease of medical consultations, decrease of the number of untreated opportunistic infections, retaining health care workers etc) has not been mentioned.
- How the financial resources put in AIDS would help strengthening medical services?
- So far, we have no indication that the scaling up did decrease the quality of care
provided.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

page 3, table 1: 2005 (in the text 2004). Please correct

pate 2: any chance to update the 2004 numbers?

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)


What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

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 interests