Reviewer’s report

Title: Patients’ Dissatisfaction with the Public and Private Laboratory Services in Tanzania

Version: 1 Date: 23 December 2007

Reviewer: Ole Norheim

Reviewer’s report:

The aim of this study was to determine whether patients are satisfied (with HIV and HIV related) laboratory services provided by public and private laboratories in Tanzania. The topic is important and of relevance for readers of this journal.

Many of the same comments given to the sister publication about health personnel satisfaction also applies to this paper.

Suggestions for improvement:

Major compulsory revisions

In this paper, also, the title, abstract and introduction should reflect the fact that this is not a general study of all laboratory services. Only laboratories qualified to conduct HIV related testing were included.

The first paragraph of the introduction is very similar in wording as the sister publication. To avoid confusion, try to change wording more.

It is argued that services should respond to patients need, but observe that satisfaction of needs is not measured as patient satisfaction.

Last paragraph in intro: Most current researchers are less interested in correlations between patient characteristics and satisfaction. What is the meaning of this sentence? This study also looks into this correlation? Clarify. Provide references (to most current researchers).

Were self-administered or interview administered questionnaires used? The description semi open ended standard questionnaire must be clarified. More info on the questionnaire is also needed. How was satisfaction measured, on a scale or dichotomised. Were indifferent responses allowed?

Selection of respondents: The text says that first 12 where included. Did all asked accept to be included? Response rate?

Add randomisation method in the selection of laboratories.

Ethics: Informed, written or oral consent?

Results: Add response rate. First sentence in results refers to mean age (tab 1 missing). Add new table 1 with baseline info on informants. There
should also be a new table 1 with all baseline information about respondents including sex, age, and educational level.

First paragraph: However, there was not statistical significance (sic) difference between private and public laboratory service users. Unclear. Be more precise (demonstrate in table 1).

Discussion: I miss comparisons with similar studies in (East-) Africa.

Most importantly: There should be a paragraph on Strength and limitations of the study. I miss a more critical attitude to the results. Are the findings valid and reliable?

Final sentence: this could explain why private laboratories were more efficient than the public laboratories. This does not follow from the results of this study. It is impossible to conclude about laboratory efficiency from the results. Rephrase this discussion.

Reference list: Only seven papers are quoted. Is it not possible to identify other and more relevant studies on patient satisfaction?

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: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests