Reviewer's report

Title: Potential cost and physician personnel impact of task-shifting for antiretroviral therapy in Uganda

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Reviewer: nathan ford

Reviewer's report:

This is an important and timely study, and well written. I only have a few comments to make.

PAGE 4
Two important studies were recently presented at the IAS in Cape Town. This article would have been submitted well before then, but I would suggest you add reference to these in the background. Their abstract numbers are MOAD101 and LBPED03 and they can be accessed at:
http://www.ias2009.org/pag/PosterExhibition.aspx

Note that both of these studies are RCTs and on page 10 you call for randomized studies, so this section would need updating as well.

PAGE 5
Can you give an indication of whether broadly speaking there are differences in the types of patients assigned to each algorithm. In the discussion you mention there may be a selection bias with sickerer patients entering the 'doctor track' but as programme implementers I imagine you have a sense of whether patients are triaged or whether, at this stage, it is random. This would be important to mention in the programme description and in the discussion

PAGE 9
The estimation of doctor time saved is important, but some reflection needs to be given to whether a commensurate increase in nurses/pharmacists would be needed. This would be unlikely to undermine the gains proposed (nurses are more plentiful, quicker to train, less expensive to pay) but without a statement about reinforcing lower cadres readers might be left with a sense of only being told half the story.

PAGE 11
"We recognize that task shifting is not without it's problems"
I suggest changing 'problem' to 'challenge' as doing training and supervision is not a problem.

I would also alter the sentence on overlooking serious conditions; algorithms have been validated that allow nurses to detect even complex forms of TB (see
eg Saranchuk et al, S Afr Med J. 2007 Jul;97(7):517-23). So the issue is not that nurses make mistakes, but that they need appropriate training, tools, and supervision.

**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