Reviewer's report

Title: HIV-associated tuberculosis: relationship between disease severity and the sensitivity of new sputum-based and urine-based diagnostic assays

Version: 3 Date: 13 August 2013

Reviewer: giuseppe ippolito

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HIV-associated tuberculosis: relationship between disease severity and the sensitivity of new sputum-based and urine-based diagnostic assays

Short title: Diagnostic sensitivity for HIV-associated TB

Stephen D. Lawnn et al.

The diagnosis of HIV-associated TB, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, is often challenging. The article is complete and accurate, the design and statistical analysis are well performed, and the authors are really competent in the field. They already published several papers on different diagnostic and prognostic approaches in HIV-TB coinfected patients in South-Africa. The paper gives a contribution to the assessment of relationship between severity of tuberculosis and the sensitivity of diagnostic procedures.

The overall judgment is positive, and I recommend to accept it. I have just few comments that can be considered in the revision of the discussion and in the interpretation of results. Find them listed below:

-the general issue of diagnostics in less developed countries, including deciding on and monitoring treatment, would certainly require a capillary yet simple system of laboratories. Previous experiences made in some countries have proven low sustainability and have almost always heavily relied on international aid. A robust and locally managed laboratory network for the first line management of HIV- and TB-related problems would be sustainable in the long run. The importance of starting a debate on the issue could be acknowledged;

-the new tools for TB are really promising, but data on validity and impact of outcome for patients are still controversial, especially in less developed countries. Recently a study conducted in Johannesburg [Hanrahan CF. PLoS One. 2013 Jun 6;8(6] and the design of a trial to evaluate the new diagnostics in rural South Africa [Lessells RJ. Trials. 2013 Jun 12;14:170] have been published.

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interest.