Reviewer's report

**Title:** A population-based study of HIV in south India reveals major differences from sentinel surveillance based estimates

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 29 October 2006

**Reviewer:** J. Ties Boerma

**Reviewer's report:**

General
The paper presents the results of a large household survey with HIV testing in a single district of India. The high response rates, well documented survey implementation and quality control mechanisms are likely to have ascertained the quality of the survey results. HIV prevalence rates are presented by sex, residence, socio-economic position, and utilization of antenatal care. Age-specific results are presented in annex tables. The study also includes an interview survey of antenatal clients attending the public clinics in the national surveillance system which offer important information to assess potential biases by type of service delivery point when it comes to surveillance.

The results are markedly different from the estimates produced by the Ministry of Health for the district, based on surveillance in two urban antenatal clinics in the district itself and STD clinics in other districts in Andhra Pradesh state. The survey-based estimate of HIV prevalence among adult men and women combined is 1.7% which is less than half of the rate observed in the pregnant women attending the ANC surveillance clinics.

The study is important and the results deserve publication. The paper is rather lengthy and contains a lot of detailed information in the text which may be better presented in supplemental materials, or in well structured tables or graphics in the main document. All materials however deserve to be published.

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

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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)

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**Discretionary Revisions** (which the author can choose to ignore)

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**Which journal?** Appropriate or potentially appropriate for BMC Medicine: an article of importance in its field

**What next?** Accept for publication in BMC Medicine after discretionary revisions

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I have no competing interests