Reviewer's report

Title: The impact of Provider-Initiated (Opt-out) HIV Testing and Counselling of patients with sexually transmitted infection in Cape Town, South Africa. A controlled trial

Version: 1 Date: 29 October 2009

Reviewer: Theresa Munyombwe

Reviewer's report:

1. Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined?

The question posed by researchers is new as they are comparing a new program PITC with an existing VCT and its well defined in terms of population studied, intervention and outcomes.

2. Are methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replicate the work?

The methods are well described there is a clear methodology section with study setting, detailed study design, study population and sampling techniques used, description of treatment groups, data collection methods and statistical analysis of the data.

Sufficient detail is given to replicate the study.

The authors demonstrated how sample size was determined taking into account clustering sampling. An ICC of 0.08 was used but it was not justified. Is it from previous studies? If yes, give references.

The design is flawed in terms of randomisation. There is no random allocation of treatments to clinics. One would wonder whether the studied clinics are representative of all the clinics or they is selection bias. Assessors were also not blinded this could result in assessment bias.

3. Statistical methods

The statistical methods are sound and some of the assumptions of the tests were checked except the normality assumption for the t test. Can the authors check the normality assumption for the response variable.

The authors have used a one sided test for all the comparisons except the comparison of 26.7% and 13.5%. What is the reason for changing?

On page 15 of the paper, the total for control offered HIV testing is given as 3407
yet table 2 shows 3406. The average is given as 50.9% for the control group yet table 2 shows 50.7%.

The results of the multinomial logistic regression were not reported. Why did the authors exclude these results?

4. Are the data sound and well controlled?

The authors have given evidence of balancing the groups by factors that could influence the outcomes (tables 1 and 4). Are age and sex the only patient demographic characteristics that needed to be balanced at baseline?

5. Are the discussions and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?

The discussions and conclusions are balanced and adequately supported by the data.

6. Does the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?

The abstract accurately convey the findings and the writing of the manuscript is acceptable.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**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 interests.