Reviewer's report

Title: Comparison of retention in observational cohorts and nested Simulated HIV Vaccine Efficacy Trials in the Key populations in Uganda

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Reviewer: Philippe Flandre

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Abaasa and colleagues investigate whether patients involved in simulated HIV Vaccine Efficacy Trials (SiVETs) had different rates of dropout/lost to follow up than patients included in observational cohorts. SiVETs are nested in two observational cohorts in Uganda. The main objective is to compare such rates in these two observational cohorts but also to determine factors associated with dropout. The work is interesting and I have only few comments.

comments.

1. From the figure 1, I understand that 672 patients from the 1525 patients eligible for screening were screened for SiVETs. It is not clear for me whether the 672 are the first 672 patients otherwise how these patients were selected? Only 100 patients were not enrolled for SiVETs with reasons given in Figure 1. It seems that non patient refused to be enrolled. Therefore I do not understand why there are such differences between the 572 patients enrolled among the first 672 patients and the 'last' 853 (1525-672) that was not screened because the number 572 was already achieved.

2. In Table 4 the rates in the non-SiVET1 for male and female are similar (28.6 vs. 27.0) but in Table 5 the aRR is statistically significant (Female aRR=0.5). I'm wondering if this is correct.

3. Results for Sex while drunk should be given in Table 4.

What is HCT in Figure 1?

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes
Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
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I am able to assess the statistics

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