Reviewer's report

Title: Integration of antenatal syphilis screening in an urban HIV clinic: A feasibility study

Version: 2 Date: 14 October 2014

Reviewer: Jeffrey Klausner

Reviewer's report:

Major comments:
1. The WHO has called for the dual elimination of HIV and syphilis through a harmonized/integrated approach. This important to highlight in this manuscript as this study provides evidence for the success of integration. Include as a reference the WHO dual elimination strategy: available here: http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/rtis/9789241505888/en/
2. This is a feasibility study, however the authors do not fully discuss whether this was a feasible intervention
3. The discussion touches on recommendations for use of treponemal rapid tests. Please clarify the distinction between rapid treponemal tests and RPR (non-treponemal), which was used in this study. Also – since this study was about the use of a non-treponemal test for screening, please add more information and evidence for why you recommend the use of a treponemal test. You could touch on the ease of use of the rapid treponemal tests etc.
4. Please report the percentage of RPR confirmed TPPA+ confirmed and the distribution of RPR titers.

Minor comments:
1. Line 32: Rapid plasma reagin is misspelled in the abstract
2. Line 52: remove “It is estimated that” and leave the sentence as “In sub-Saharan Africa there are approximately…”
3. Line 60: The authors state that 23% of women were screened, but should specify what they were screened for.
4. Line 62: The first sentence of the second paragraph is confusing, please clarify. Additionally, the word “offer” should only be used once in this sentence.
5. Line 77: Please remove the phrase “we wondered if” and replace it with something like “We aimed to…”
6. Line 97: you state you used RPR, a non-treponemal test to define a syphilis positive case. The next sentence you mention a treponemal test. What was this used for? Please clarify how the treponemal test was used. Also, please state the name and manufacturer of the treponemal test.
7. Line 103: Was RPR the only test that was used to identify women that required treatment? Was the test result confirmed with another test? Was patient history
also used to determine treatment requirements?

8. Line 104: Were participants treated with 1 IM of benzathine penicillin? Please state if it was 1 injection or more.

9. Line 118: Please include the version number of STATA

10. Line 125: The sentence says “606 pregnant, HIV-infected were approached…” Please include 'women' or ‘participants’ so that the sentence is something such as: “606 HIV-infected pregnant women were approached…”.

11. Line 149: In the results the authors say that only age was significantly different between those with and without a positive RPR. In the table it looks like RPR-positive participants tended to be younger. Please state this in the results.

12. Line 151-152: This sentence is confusing, please clarify

13. Line 151-154: Please include both the N and the percentage for clarification.

14. Line 166-168: This sentence is confusing and should be clarified. Please also discuss the reporting bias further. Why is there a reporting bias? Which direction would this bias the results?

15. Line 169-170: This sentence doesn’t relate to anything else in the discussion. Either remove it or discuss it further.

16. 176: The authors stated that “Data from Chico et al. suggests that screening for multiple STIs may also be warranted…”. This comes from a review paper so please replace the word “data” with something more suggestive of a review paper.

17. Line 178: This might be a good place to discuss the advent of new rapid point of care tests that can detect multiple infections with one test device using one fingerprick of blood. There are currently 5 manufacturers of dual HIV/syphilis point-of-care tests. Here is an example: http://ofid.oxfordjournals.org/content/1/1/ofu015.full

18. Line 188: Here you mention that one quarter of partners of infected women from your study come in for testing. However, in the results you state that its 10/29, this is more than one quarter. Please clarify.

19. Line 199: what challenges are you referring to?

20. Line 204-205: “We need to seize the opportunity of this roll out, and the training of healthcare workers during this period to integrate syphilis screening into PMTCT B and B plus programs.” This is a very important point and should be expanded upon. This should be a main conclusion. You can use the article from Klausner et al. 2013 in the Bulletin (entitled: Sound of Silence) as a reference. PMID 23476083

21. Line 207: “Vertical care”. If you integrate these HIV programs would they no longer be called “vertical care”? Please remove “vertical care” from this sentence.

22. Reference 4: This reference is incomplete

23. Reference 10: This reference is incomplete

24. Table 1: Please add a footnote that states what tests were used to generate
p-values. Or remove the p-values from the table.

25. Table 1: Please add more detail to the title of the table.

**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:**

Dr Klausner and Claire Bristow have received travel reimbursement from Standard Diagnostics in the past 5 years.