Reviewer's report

Title: High Rates of Unplanned Interruptions from HIV Care Early After Antiretroviral Therapy Initiation in Nigeria

Version: 2 Date: 3 April 2015

Reviewer: Kriti Jain

Reviewer's report:

Overall, I think this is an extremely strong paper that I would recommend for publication in BMC Infectious Diseases. Specifically, the authors have clearly posed an interesting, relevant question in an area highly affected by the HIV epidemic. To my knowledge, the team has used appropriate statistical methods and described them clearly. The data are sound, although contain the limitations that any study occurring in this clinic-based environment would. However, the authors highlight these limitations in their discussion section. The figures appear to be genuine and clearly support the text. I believe that this manuscript adheres to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition with which I am familiar; any suggestions I have are outlined below. The discussion and conclusion section are very strong, appropriately draw upon existing literature on HIV linkage and retention in care within the most geographically similar resource-limited settings. The authors' additional insights among a less-explored group, students in Nigeria, is particularly helpful for the field and represents a well-articulated potential new area of focus.

Major compulsory revisions

• Please add a phrase or sentence clarifying why pregnant women were not included in the analysis. In the subsection of the methods called “Study Design”, the authors write “Pregnant women were not included in the cohort”. Does that mean that pregnant women were not receiving HIV care at this clinic? Or does it mean that pregnant women were purposefully excluded from this analysis? If the latter, please include a reason why.

Discretionary revisions

• Under the running head, I would recommend addition of the following words in bold: “High Rates of Unplanned HIV Care Interruption”. It is currently written “High Rates of Unplanned Care Interruption.”

• Within the subsection of the methods called “Study Design”, please clarify whether all patients received adherence counseling, clinical examination, and TB screening at subsequent appointments. If not all patients received these services, are there differences between those with and without UCI? Are data available to be able to answer this question? If not, please include this as a limitation.

• Within the subsection of the methods called “Study Design”, please clarify the
following sentence: “Upon clinic enrollment, patients were expected to receive a variety of services including…” does “expected” imply that not all patients received all of these services? If that is the case, why? Might services received have an impact on UCI? If it is impossible to discern this, please include it as a limitation.

• Within the subsection of the results called “Patterns of Care”, please discuss patients who switched clinics. How much is known about this group, who are sometimes called “silent transfers”? Could it be possible that some of the inactive or patients with UCI actually switched clinics for some time? While the authors mention this group, I am curious to know whether data are available that could describe it further. If not, please consider including this as a limitation.

Minor essential revisions

• In the final paragraph of the methods section, there is a space missing between reference #15 “[15]” and the preceding word, “patients”.

• Within the results subsection called “Factors Associated with UCI in the First Year on ART”, second paragraph, first sentence: please add a space between “>350” and “cells/µL”. Please also correct the unit from “uL” to “µL”.

• In the final paragraph in the results section, Please also correct the unit for CD4 count from “cells/uL” to “cells/µL”.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.