Reviewer’s report

Title: The complex relationship between human immunodeficiency virus infection and death in adults being treated for tuberculosis in Cape Town, South Africa

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Reviewer: Brenda E Jones

Reviewer’s report:

The authors report the results of a retrospective analysis of all deaths occurring during tuberculosis (TB) treatment in Cape Town, South Africa between 2009 and 2012. This study is one of the largest described cohorts of adults treated for TB with a total of 93,133 TB cases reviewed with a 5% mortality rate. The authors discuss the complexity involved in determining the risk factors for mortality in HIV positive and HIV negative TB patients. HIV carried an increased risk of death and specific high risk groups such as women and younger patients were identified.

The authors sited the limitations of the study, including incomplete documentation of HIV medication use. There was also difficulty in obtaining information regarding smoking, alcohol use, opportunistic infection, and body mass index which could be addressed in a prospective study. The study also defined death as a TB case dying before the end of treatment regardless of the cause.

Understanding factors associated with mortality while on TB treatment would permit the development of strategies to manage high risks groups and strengthen the TB control program.

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.