Reviewer's report

**Title:** Social and Clinical Attributes of Patients who restart Antiretroviral Therapy in Central and Copperbelt Provinces of Zambia

**Version:** 3  **Date:** 17 January 2015

**Reviewer:** Edward Mills

**Reviewer's report:**

This paper addresses an important and largely unrecognized issue related to patients who default from care, that some of them, even many, will return to care. This is important because previous methodologic studies assume that these patients typically die or transferred to another clinic, when in fact, they may be just taking breaks from care.

I have several suggestions below that I think the authors may want to consider to improve the clarity of their message.

1) In your analysis looking at employment, I don’t think it is surprising that employed patients do better than unemployed and this may have nothing to do with employment, just that their health has always been better, including socio-economic support. I would downplay the importance of this finding or at least explain it in more detail. As you currently have it, it reads as if employment is causative for better health, but it is probably the other way around. You can read some of the new work in this area by Uthaman in Bulletin of WHO.

2) Introduction, I would not use the term ‘ironically’ here as this is hardly an amusing issue.

3) You state that (page 4) female patients are more likely to default, but this is usually men who default more (at least as a ratio). You should at least support your statement with a reference.

4) You need to reorganize your section on statistics as it is written in a dysfunctional way.

5) I don’t really think you need to provide the results at each time point as the longest time point would suffice. However, this is minor.

6) You should address the concept of churning in and out of care somewhere in the discussion.

7) I think you should infer the gender issues counter to how you present them. It isn’t that women are doing better, it is that men are doing much worse.

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

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published
Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests: I declare that I have no competing interests