Reviewer’s report

Title: Retention of HIV Exposed Infants in care at Arua Regional Referral Hospital, Uganda: a retrospective cohort study

Version: 0 Date: 09 Nov 2018

Reviewer: Brian Eley

Reviewer's report:

This study has generated interesting findings. It is well written. The authors should consider the following minor comments:

1. Abstract methods sub-section, last sentence: For improved clarity consider changing this sentence to "Logistic regression was performed to determine factors independently associated with retention."

2. Introduction, 3rd paragraph, 2nd sentence: Consider deleting this sentence as it is not clearly written and adding reference 23 at the end of the previous sentence.

3. Methods and materials: The study period of the first 18 months of life of HIV exposed infants, although suggested at the end of the introduction is not clearly stated in the methods and materials section. This omission should be corrected. In addition, the frequency and number of infant follow-up clinic visits during the study period should also be added to the methods and materials section.

4. Methods and materials, sub-section: statistical analysis, 3rd paragraph: This paragraph suggests that if HIV-infected infants were started on ART they were included in the retained group. However, it is unclear whether all of these infants remained on ART and in care at 18 months or whether some had defaulted ART by 18 months. Was retention at 18 months confirmed in those children who were commenced on ART? If not it should be acknowledged as a study limitation in the discussion of the paper.

5. Methods and materials, sub-section: statistical analysis, final paragraph, 2nd sentence and table 2: Is it necessary to display both the 95% confidence interval and the p value? The 95% confidence interval should be sufficient to interpret the logistic regression results. Please justify this decision or revise the text and table 2.

6. Table 1, legend title: For improved accuracy consider changing this legend title to Characteristics of infants and their mothers
7. Table 1, row entitled "Maternal age in years": Please expand this title by indicating at what time point the maternal age was documented. For example, was maternal age recorded at the time of the infant's birth?

8. Discussion, 1st paragraph, 5th sentence: This sentence states that deliberate steps should be taken to improve retention. Can you expand this sentence and indicate what specific steps should be / can be implemented within existing resources at Aru Regional Referral Hospital? If specific steps are proposed then indicate whether previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of these measures in improving retention and provide suitable references.

9. Correct minor grammatical errors

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?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I am able to assess the statistics

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Needs some language corrections before being published

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