Reviewer’s report

Title: Maximizing adherence and retention for women living with HIV and their infants in Kenya (MOTIVATE study): study protocol for a randomized controlled trial

Version: 0 Date: 01 Nov 2017

Reviewer: Gillian Hunt

Reviewer’s report:

Comments: A well-constructed study design and plan.

The following should be addressed:

Line 8: if the guideline was referred to as option B, what is it now referred to?

Please describe the mobile coverage and accessibility in the regions to be studied. Can all persons afford cell phones? Is this a source of selection bias and/or confounding? Is cell-phone access income-dependent and could this be a reason for poor adherence?

The participant selection criteria is biased. Access to phones discussed above. Willingness to have home visits and visit a counsellor could be a source of selection bias. Whilst this bias is present at each sites, what efforts are considered to either estimate, minimize or measure this.

What risks are there for participants (eg involuntary disclosure)? How are these to be managed?

Who will be recruiting participants at each site? How will selection bias be managed by recruiters?

Why is a VL <1000cpm considered virally suppressed, when the international norm is <400 or <50 cpm?

Is there a defined study period / limit? What happens if sample size is not achieved in that time?

Level of interest
Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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

Acceptable

Quality of figures
All images and figures within the manuscript should be genuine i.e. without evidence of manipulation. No specific feature within an image may be enhanced, obscured, moved, removed, or introduced. If you have concerns about the veracity of the figures you should choose the first option below.

**Statistical review**  
Is it essential that this manuscript is seen by an expert statistician? If so, please give your reasons in your report.

**Declaration of competing interests**  
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?

If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

I declare that I have no competing interests

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.
I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal