

## **Reviewer's report**

**Title:** Impact of infection with human immunodeficiency virus-1 (HIV) on the risk of cancer among children in Malawi - preliminary findings.

**Version:** 1 **Date:** 25 November 2009

**Reviewer:** Andrew Grulich

### **Reviewer's report:**

#### General

This is an interesting new report from a group which has published previously on cancer and HIV in Malawi. I have a few suggestions for change as below.

#### Specific:

**Abstract:** Under methods, I think it is misleading to say "confirmed cancer diagnosis" as it becomes clearer later that many diagnoses were only on clinical grounds.

#### Methods

What is meant by "small round blue cell tumours?"

#### Results

Line 2: What is meant by a "documented diagnosis?"

Given the known association between Leiomyosarcoma and HIV, it would be worth adding a discussion of whether there is possible diagnostic confusion between that diagnosis and rhabdomyosarcoma.

Discussion, page 6, para 1: Line about Burkitt lymphoma. Given the wide confidence intervals, this sentence should not begin with "In contrast", and should acknowledge that the relative risk was raised, although not significantly.

Page 7, line 1: This is the first mention of clinical grounds for diagnosis of lymphoma. It is important that a description be added in the methods section of what was required to constitute a clinical diagnosis of lymphoma. Without that information it is difficult to know what this odds ratio represents. For example, how was HIV-related or TB-related lymphadenopathy excluded as a cause of an enlarged lymph node?

Table 4: the terms listed under method of diagnosis require some explanation (in the methods section). For example does "laboratory confirmed" mean histologically verified? What does "clinical investigations" mean?

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**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'