Chapter 6

Conclusions

The results of this study are similar to other international and African research findings. The HIV infected children in Gauteng, South Africa are at greater risk of neurodevelopmental and growth delays than HIV uninfected children in the same area. The HIV virus has an impact on both neurodevelopment and growth of infected children.

The HIV infected children in this study have particularly low scores in both mental and motor development scales but these are lower than those of other research findings. This indicates that there are compounding factors, besides HIV, that impact on the neurodevelopment of these children. The possible effects of poverty, prolonged illness and malnutrition need to be the subject of research over a longer period of time.

The findings of this study indicate that the motor development, but not the mental development, of HIV uninfected children was delayed. Further investigations of the past and present environmental circumstances are needed to explain this finding.

There is a significant improvement in all the growth parameters of both HIV infected and HIV uninfected children in this study. This indicates that, although these children were institutionalised, they benefited from that environment. Aspects of this institutionalised environment could be considered as a means of
assisting other children with growth delays. However the emotional and psychological aspects of this placement were not evaluated.

This study of orphaned HIV infected and HIV an uninfected child serves to highlight the areas of concern, and the directions of future research. This study gives an indication of outcomes which are of value, specifically in the unique South African context.