Reviewer's report

Title: Flocked Nasal Swab versus Nasopharyngeal Aspirate for Detection of Respiratory Tract Viruses in Immunocompromised Adults: a Matched Comparative Study

Version: 1 Date: 2 November 2010

Reviewer: Carlo Federico Perno

Reviewer's report:

Minor Compulsory Revisions

1) The meaning of qPCR needs to be explicitly stated.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1) There are some concerns about the samples collection. In particular, the time interval of 72 hours after the fever onset can be too long and there is the possibility that the viral load in nasopharyngeal regions goes under the detection limit. A good approach to this problem is to reduce the time interval to collect the sample after the fever onset. It can be a good idea to analyze more samples and to collect them within 24 hours from fever onset. If data are available about this issue, they need to be incorporated in the text.

2) Some data are missing. In particular:
   • the median number of absolute neutrophil count and its standard deviation,
   • the median age of patients and its standard deviation
   • the number of women and men and their median ages
   • the prevalence rates of hematological disorders in patients

3) The potential limitations of this work are not stated. Concerns about the limits of the study design and the intrinsic variability due to inclusion of people with different diseases and treatments, need to be explicitly mentioned in the Discussion

4) Page 6, line 6: P value =.15 is not generally considered as statistically significant.
   If the P value is wrong it must be changed otherwise this interpretation isn’t correct.

5) Paired t-test assumes that the variables differences are normally distributed. Have you checked this assumption? If this differences aren’t normally distributed the test needs to be changed (e.g.: Wilcoxon signed-rank test).

6) The sum of PCR reagents seems to be wrong, 25 (20+5) seems to be the right
sum, while now the total volume is 50.

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.