Reviewer’s report

Title: Comparing human papillomavirus prevalence in women with normal cytology and invasive cervical cancer to rank genotypes according to their oncogenic potential: A meta-analysis of observational studies

Version: 1 Date: 9 March 2013

Reviewer: Tricia Luhn

Reviewer’s report:

Major compulsory:
• It is unclear why there are no North American studies included in this meta-analysis. Based on the inclusion criteria listed (unvaccinated women, prevalence data for at least one genotype other than 16 & 18, 20+ cases and 20+ controls, and data presented for cases and controls separately), there are at least two large epidemiologic studies in the US that were not included, specifically SUCCEED and KNPC. These studies should be included in the analysis, however, if they were excluded for specific reasons, that should be explicitly addressed in the discussion where the authors mention the lack of North American Studies. Although cervical cancer is declining in the US, there are still several epidemiologic studies that include cancers as well as controls and therefore the statement that they were not included due to the majority of the cancer burden residing elsewhere in the world doesn’t seem to be reflected in published literature. The lack of these two studies in particular also leaves the question of what other studies may have been excluded or missed and how that would affect the results.
• The authors should include some discussion about the how the results relate to the biology of HPV infections in cervical cancer, especially the differences in the alpha 5 and alpha 7 types and their detection in cervical specimens.

Minor essential:
• Several paragraphs in the discussion could benefit from careful editing.

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

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests