Reviewer's report

Title: A retrospective analysis of the costs and management of genital warts in Italy

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Reviewer: Luciano Mariani

Reviewer's report:

Gianino's article addresses a topic of great importance, which deserves some considerations. Due to the increased prevalence in the last decades, costs and management of genital warts are becoming a public health priority worldwide. Although there is a lack of knowledge about numerical size of the problem (because in Italy genital warts are not a mandatory notifying disease), the economic burden is expected to be very high. Indeed, anogenital warts are considered the second highest contributor in Italy to the economic burden of HPV 6, 11, 16, 18 after cervical diseases (Baio G, 2012).

The present manuscript focuses on the retrospective analysis of management of outpatients at a single dermatologic STI clinic in Turin, during 2008. The article opens a useful knowledge on this topic, and is recommended its publication without modifications. Nevertheless, the overall conclusions are far from an exhaustive comprehension of the cost and the economic burden of such disease. Indeed, as reported by the author, the perception is that many genital warts cases escape the public health system to be treated in private settings, particularly (in case of female population) by a gynaecologist. This is an important point, because in these cases the estimations of costs are certainly higher than that reported, mainly due to the use of laser-vaporization rather than cryotherapy (as usually performed by dermatologists). Furthermore, total costs of genital warts should calculated by the sum of single and recurrent/persistent/resistant episodes or complications as well, with indirect costs (such as productivity loss, sick leave). Moreover, such issues are also geographically related, while the Gianino's article reflects a single region experience, rather than a national overview. In this sense, the results of Gianino's article are likely to underestimate total economic burden of genital warts, which still remains an unknown entity under many point of view. Despite these limitations, the study provides useful information concerning treatment of genital warts in both sexes, and concerning the national vaccination program.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.
Declaration of competing interests:

I partecipate a project with Istituto Superiore di Sanità to estimate the prevalence and incidence of external genital warts in italian general female population aged 15-64 years in Italy.

I declare that I have no competing interests concerning the other questions.