Author’s response to reviews

Title: Prevalence of Human Papillomavirus in young Italian women with normal cytology. How should we adapt the national vaccination policy?

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Author’s response to reviews: see over
Prevalence of Human Papillomavirus in young Italian women with normal cytology. How should we adapt the national vaccination policy?

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Dear Dr. Harris,

We have read the comments of reviewer Dr. Kate Soldan and, as you request, we have provided a point-by-point response to the concerns raised. We hope that our answers will be helpful to the editorial board. All the corrections appear in red in the text.

Yours sincerely,

Donatella Panatto

**REPLIES TO REVIEWER: KATE SOLDAN**

In our revised manuscript, sent July 11, 2013, we reviewed the results section, as requested (previous comment 1) and presented the results for high-risk HPV types first, followed by the findings for low-risk types. We also added further remarks at the end of the discussion section to support our considerations regarding the need to extend free vaccination to women up to 26 years of age. Furthermore, in the last sentence of the discussion section, we specified more clearly that our results supporting the vaccination of females up to 26 years of age should be considered applicable to women without cervical lesions.

Regarding the comment that our conclusions were an overstatement of the data presented, our point is that the results were obtained from a reasonably extensive and reliable sample. This is supported by the precision of the percentages found; for instance the confidence interval of the percentage of subjects found to be positive was 6.5 percentage points, with a standard error of 1.73. In any case, on the basis of our findings, we suggest, but do not claim, that women up to 26 years of age should be vaccinated.

In this new version of the manuscript we have added new sentences to the discussion section to support our results and considerations. We have added two new references, one of which cites a paper co-authored by Kate Soldan, which asserts that “HPV vaccination is likely to provide additional protection to women under the age of 30 years”. Furthermore, we have deleted the reference number 66, on account of the potential conflict of interest of one of the authors, as Kate Soldan suggests.

In the conclusion section, we have deleted the words “at least” after 26 years of age and modified the last sentence.

The tables and figures have not been changed.