Author's response to reviews

Title: Decreasing Incidence and Winter Peak of Infectious Mononucleosis in Northern Scotland

Authors:

Elizabeth Visser (e.visser@abdn.ac.uk)
Denis Milne (denis.milne@nhs.net)
Ian Collacott (ian.collacott@nhs.net)
David McLernon (d.mclernon@abdn.ac.uk)
Carl Counsell (carl.counsell@abdn.ac.uk)
Mark Vickers (m.a.vickers@abdn.ac.uk)

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To whom it may concern,

Please find our revised manuscript entitled “Decreasing Incidence and Winter Peak of Infectious Mononucleosis in Northern Scotland”.

We describe a survey on tests for infectious mononucleosis in a British Health Region. The data indicated a substantial fall in the rate of infectious mononucleosis over the study period. As there does not seem to have been a change in the prevalence of infection with EBV, we think a likely explanation is that the change arises from a change in the immune response to the virus. This interpretation would provide further evidence that there are changing environmental influences on our immune systems, as shown by other changes in the incidences of allergies and autoimmune diseases.

The study also informs our initial hypothesis of a winter peak of IM and documented age and gender differences.

As a point of clarification to our previous submission; this project was discussed with the Ethics Coordinator of the North of Scotland Research Ethics Committee, and as all the data in this database were anonymous with no patient identifiable information and no patient records were reviewed during the project, the advice we obtained from the Committee was that the project would not require a formal ethics application. Documentation of this advice is available if required.

We therefore hope that the subject matter will be of interest to your readers.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Elizabeth Visser