Author's response to reviews

Title: Screening of post-mortem tissue donors for Coxiella burnetii infection after large outbreaks of Q fever in The Netherlands.

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Version: 6 Date: 6 December 2013

Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Neil,

Thank you very much for accepting our manuscript for publication in your journal. We are very pleased by that.

Regarding your request to include a statement clarifying the lack of formal ethics approval within the manuscript we have adjusted the manuscript by introducing a separate 'Ethics' paragraph, which contains the consent statements that were elsewhere in the Methods section and a statement on the Ethical considerations.

**Ethics**

*Consent for donation, including testing for transmittable infectious diseases, was obtained prior to donation from either the donor, as registered in the Dutch donor registry, or from the legal next of kin. Because of the Q fever outbreak in The Netherlands the Dutch Health Advisory board deemed additional testing for C. burnetii necessary. Since consent for testing for transmittable infectious diseases was obtained and all data were analysed anonymized no specific approval by an Ethical Committee was needed for this study according to the Code of Conduct for Health Research, as implemented by the Dutch Federation of Biomedical Scientific Societies, which is followed by the involved organisations.*

As stated in this new paragraph, according to the code of Conduct for Health Research, as implemented by the Dutch Federation of Biomedical Scientific Societies, no specific ethical committee approval is needed for anonymized data. The same is stated in the Helsinki Declaration, which states: "The World Medical Association (WMA) has developed the Declaration of Helsinki as a statement of ethical principles for medical research involving human subjects, including research on identifiable human material and data." We therefore believe that this study complies with the requested national and international ethical and legal standards.

We hope that the changes to the manuscript are satisfactory and that you can now proceed with preparations for publication.

Kind regards,

Marja J. van Wijk