Reviewer's report

Title: Male circumcision and the incidence and clearance of genital human papillomavirus infection in men: the HPV in men (HIM) cohort study

Version: 1 Date: 16 November 2013

Reviewer: Brenda Y Hernandez

Reviewer's report:

This well-described observational study of male genital HPV and circumcision is one of the largest to date and includes cohorts from three different countries.

Minor Essential Revisions

Methods:
Study population (pp. 4-5). Please clarify the languages spoken by participants across the study sites in the 3 countries and whether the CASI system was available for non-English speakers.

Penile and scrotal sampling (p. 5). Given the significant differences in country of residence by circumcision status, it is important to establish that the specimen collection methods were standardized across study sites. Please provide additional clarification of the number of clinical sites in each locale and the number and type of study personnel involved in specimen collection.

HPV analyses (p. 6). “Valid samples were available…” This should be included in the Results section.

Statistical analyses (p. 8). Given the definitions of HPV clearance (“testing HPV negative at two subsequent consecutive visits”) and HPV persistence “HPV DNA positive in two or more consecutive visits), how were other patterns of infection classified, e.g. testing HPV positive, negative, positive, at 3 consecutive visits? Also, if a participant missed a study visit, how were these missing HPV results handled in the analyses?

Results.
In addition to the median duration of follow-up, please indicate whether there were differences in the duration of follow-up for circumcised and uncircumcised men.

Were there differences in specimen sufficiency (beta-globin) by circumcision status?

Discretionary Revisions

Table 1. For clarity, remove the row percents for uncircumcised (63.6%) and circumcised (36.4%) at the top of the table. It is a bit confusing given that the percent columns for each item total 100%.

Table 1. The “unknown” values for marital status, current smoking, etc. are included in the “N” but not in the total percent. To avoid confusion, the no.
unknowns for each item could be footnoted rather than shown in the main table. There are some minor grammatical errors.

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

B. Y. Hernandez has received consultation fees from Merck and Co., Inc., manufacturer of Gardasil, for work unrelated to the present study.