Author’s response to reviews

Title: A novel pancoronavirus RT-PCR assay: frequent detection of human coronavirus NL63 in children hospitalized with respiratory tract infections in Belgium

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Author’s response to reviews:

Dear,

We would like to thank you for the swift reviewing process of the revised version of our manuscript "A novel pancoronavirus RT-PCR assay: frequent detection of human coronavirus NL63 in children hospitalized with respiratory tract infections in Belgium", which we submitted to BioMed Central Infectious Diseases.

We have carefully considered the requested formatting changes and we have revised our manuscript accordingly. We include in the resubmission form a point-by-point response to the reviewer's comments and a description of the changes that were made.

Reviewer’s comments

Discretionary Revisions

1. Sensitivity of the assay: We agree with the reviewer that the sensitivity of the pancoronavirus RT-PCR assay is not very high for HCoV-NL63. This implicates that even more HCoV-NL63 positive samples could have been detected using a more sensitive assay. However, an RT-PCR for detection of all known coronaviruses requires the use of highly degenerated primers, and this limits the sensitivity of the assay.

2. page 7, final paragraph (by moving the Methods section below the Background, this is now page 11, final paragraph): We agree with the reviewer that this was an error, an we corrected 311 into 309.

Formatting changes requested

1. Abstract: The abstract was structured into Background, Methods, Results, Conclusions.

2. Keywords section: This section was removed from the manuscript.

3. Introduction: This section was renamed as "Background".

4. Methods: This section was moved to below the Background.

5. Website addresses: We checked the manuscript text on the presence of website addresses but we couldn't find one. We did change the reference to the "NCBI www-BLAST server" into "NCBI BLAST server" (page 7).

6. Conclusions: A Conclusions section was included after the Discussion.

7. Competing Interests: We included a "Competing Interests" section below the Conclusions, and we stated: "The authors declare that they have no competing interests."

8. Authors’ contributions: We included an Authors' contributions section below the Competing interests.
9. Reference 16: USA was changed into U S A.

10. Tables: Tables were oriented in portrait.

11. Tables: The borders of the tables included as part of the manuscript file were changed into visible black lines.

12. Figures: Figures were cropped as closely as possible to minimise white space around the image.

In addition, we reformulated the Acknowledgements section.

We are very delighted that our manuscript has been found acceptable for publication in BMC Infectious Diseases, and we would like to thank you for your kind attention to our manuscript.

Best regards,

Prof. Dr. Marc Van Ranst