Reviewer's report

Title: More men than women make mucosal IgA antibodies to Human Papillomavirus type 16 (HPV-16) and HPV-18: a study of oral HPV and oral HPV antibodies in a normal healthy population.

Version: 1 Date: 17 December 2005

Reviewer: John Sellors

Reviewer's report:

General

While the subject is of interest, the ability to draw meaningful conclusions from the data presented is limited. Since the assay for oral IgA and IgG only was for antibodies to HPV types 16, 18, and 11 and the proportion of IgA that was secreted was not determined, and the presence and typing of anogenital HPV DNA was not determined, it is difficult to correlate the findings in this paper. Consideration should be given to whether these findings could be reported in a short report or a letter to the editor.

It is a concern that, since the study recruitment was conducted in a dental clinic setting there may be potential bias introduced if the prevalence of gingivitis was higher than in the general population. It is reasonable to expect that the presence of gingivitis may increase the transudation of serum antibodies or affect the local production of IgA in some way. This would impair the ability to generalize the findings. Was the presence of ginvigitis assessed in each subject and if so, did it influence the results in any way?

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

* The date of when the study was conducted should be given.
* Pg. 4, para 1 - not clear whether this statement on need to test prior to vaccination applies to a research setting or a public health vaccination program.
* Pg. 5, para 1 - not clear why authors state categorically that men would have to be included in a HPV vaccination strategy.
* Pg. 7, end of para 1 - was pre-and post - test HIV counselling done?
* Pg. 9, last para - presence of HPV-13 lesion and FEH lesions in one patient does not confirm an association.
* Table 1 - the data of some of the 34 study subjects seems to be missing in this Table and the first column is not labelled.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

* Pg 10, para 1 - the meaning of the first sentence is difficult to understand.
Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Reject because too small an advance to publish

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.