Author's response to reviews

Title: Socio-demographic determinants of coinfections by HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C viruses in central Italian prisoners

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Dear Dr. Hoffman

In response to your e-mail of 18-1-2007, I would like to make some comments, that we enclosed in the revised version of the manuscript "Socio-demographic determinants of coinfections by HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C viruses in central Italian prisoners ".

The study is cross-sectional and started in 2001. At that time in Italy there was not the need for a formal approval by an ethic committee for observational studies. Nevertheless, our study has been authorized by the Ministry of Justice upon presentation of a detailed research protocol, in which the importance of the problems concerning the research had been pointed out. Without this authorisation, we could have not performed the study, due to the impossibility to enter into the jails. We are aware that prisoners are a vulnerable study population, and for this reason we recorded only the initials of name or surname, in order to respect their privacy.

As far as data collection, we specify that all the information (including the testing) in the study came from the patients' chart, so a retrospective collection was realised. Moreover, testing is a standard procedure for all prisoners, for inmates that both referred or did not refer to the jail's clinic for medical reason. Finally, we have already introduced in the Methods section that the research was conducted according to the Helsinki Declaration.

Hoping that this answer will be sufficient for you, I'm sending best regards.

Giuseppe La Torre