Reviewer's report

Title: Estimation of the incidence of genital warts and the cost of illness in Germany: a cross-sectional study

Version: 1 Date: 28 November 2007

Reviewer: Willem I. van der Meijden

Reviewer's report:

General
This paper, with its limitations, adds to our knowledge with regard to the incidence and cost of genital warts in a major European country

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

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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)

- Abstract (Methods): just a question: why was recruitment not done in STI clinics, a well-known place for genital wart patients
- Abstract (Results): 'For recurrent cases the highest incidence was observed in women...': Since the incidence in males could not be calculated because of the small sample size, this cannot be stated in this way!
- Introduction: 'HPV is a necessary cause of cervical cancer...': the word 'necessary' should be replaced with an alternative. Sounds a little strange.
- page 5, 2nd paragraph: '...development of prophylactic HPV vaccines.' It is suggested to change 'development' into 'use'. The vaccine already exists!
- Methods: page 8, 1st paragraph (last sentence): why were new patients only evaluated by means of data collected at the first visit? In this way important data is missed. It could very well be that the cost incurred in case of new patients is considerably lower! 'Young and fresh warts' in general respond better to treatment than the older ones! This would have ment a prospective follow-up of let's say 1 year. Were the authors in a hurry to collect data? Please comment.
- Results: page 10, line 6: I wonder why there is such a high number of warts with an 'unknown' status. This may lead to the assumption that the quality of the patient records from which data were extracted is suboptimal. Further in the paper the 'unknown' status warts are considered as 'existing'. Couldn't they also be 'new' warts?
- page 12, first paragraph, halfway: 'internal' and 'external' should be properly defined, both in men and women! No data are given about the presence of genital warts at the vagina and cervix! These data are certainly needed, since
experts agree that the presence of vaginal/cervical warts may to a large extent determine 'the difficulty' of getting rid of warts in female patients!

- page 12, last but one line: 'Existing patients...' should be replaced with 'Patients with existing...'

- page 13: reasons for hospitalization should be given. Will the readers understand why hospitalization of patients with 'resistant' warts was four times longer than the hospitalization of those with 'recurrent' warts? I don't! Please comment. Maybe this has to be explained in the Discussion section.

- page 15: what is the meaning of the last sentence of the paragraph 'Multivariable analysis'??

- page 21: there are some mistakes in the initials of the authors which have to be corrected.


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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

**What next?:** Accept after minor essential revisions

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

'I declare that I have no competing interests'