Reviewer's report

Title: Cryptic Leishmania infantum infection in Italian HIV infected patients

Version: 3 Date: 9 January 2009

Reviewer: Joaquina Martin-Sanchez

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The authors have not provided a satisfactory answer to the question I posed previously in point 2. I fail to understand why, if the PCR detection limit is 0.001 parasites/ml, they then proceed to only consider specimens with 1 or more parasites/ml to be positive (the authors should clarify whether they mean 1 or 0.1 parasites/ml, as both values appear in the text and figures at different points). This would only be justifiable if the technique were found to be lacking in specificity when dealing with such low bands of parasite concentration. However, the authors assure us that the technique is specific at these levels (p. 7, lines 16-17). If the authors are sure that what they are detecting is Leishmania DNA, it makes no sense that in a study which attempts to determine the prevalence of cryptic infection, they should disregard cases of infection simply because parasite concentration is low.

2. I also find all the information regarding the statistical study to be insufficient and poorly explained. The authors should indicate which type of regression was used and specify whether the variables were continuous or categorical, providing a list of categories in the latter case. The authors could express the results in the form of a table in which the values obtained for both the uni- and multivariate analysis are displayed, or at the very least for the multivariate analysis, as this is the more interesting of the two. In the results and discussion section, when they refer to the existence of associations, they should make use of the information provided by this analysis. The confidence intervals indicated on page 9 cannot possibly be correct.

Minor essential revisions

P. 5 line 15, change IFI to IFAT

Check microlitre symbols, which have been altered in the formatted text, appearing as small squares

P. 6 line 22-23, delete "Each amplification was performed in duplicate" as it appears twice
Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests'