Reviewer's report

Title: Cryptic Leishmania infantum infection in Italian HIV infected patients

Version: 3 Date: 13 January 2009

Reviewer: Roser Fisa

Reviewer's report:

General comments:
The paper is interesting as it emphasise the importance of asymptomatic L. infantum infection of HIV infected patients in the Mediterranean area. The high prevalence observed is in agreement with the few studies performed in the Mediterranean area, and highlights the increased risk of suffering clinical VL that such patients are under. The authors studied a large number of HIV patients and studied humoral immune response and Leishmania parasitemia.

Minor Essential Revisions:
Authors said page “Parasitemia ranged between 1 and 1500 parasites/ml with a median of 9 parasites/ml (table 1)”.
Those values are high in some individuals and discrepant with others works (Mary et al, 2006 and Bossofalsco et al., 2003) when VL HIV patients and in non-HIV asymptomatic patients from the Mediterranean area are studied. As there are no quantitative results about asymptomatic HIV Leishmania infantum parasitemia in the literature, and the high values obtained in some patients in this study, results must be carefully confirmed, because of their importance, and must be DISCUSSED and compared with results of VL HIV patients and non-HIV asymptomatic carriers. Also, must be DISCCUSED the importance of the control of the patients 7,13,14, and 15.

Pag 10 discussion. Authors said “The lower percentage of parasitemia detected in our study can be attributable to the higher threshold that we choose for positive samples”, That could be an explanation if the sensitivity of the ELISA-PCR of Garcia-Garcia et al, is higher (?). Another explanation could be a different prevalence of the asymptomatic leishmaniosis in your endemic area that could be discussed.

I have also the following comments for the authors to address:
Page 5. better not to specify that you have only the "oral" consent.
Page 6. description lysis mix
Page 6. the sentence “each amplification was performed in duplicate” is duplicate in the text.
Figure 1. results of patient 14 are missed? There are 22 dots and legend indicate 24 HIV infected patients.

Figure 2. There are 21 dots although legend indicate 24 HIV infected patients?
Page 9 CI in the plasma viral load in the univariate and multivariate analysis is correct?

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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 competings