Reviewer's report

Title: Human Papillomavirus (HPV) infection in pregnant women and mother-to-child transmission of genital HPV genotypes: a prospective study in Spain

Version: 2 Date: 12 October 2008

Reviewer: Alexandros Daponte

Reviewer's report:

October 9, 2008

Dear Editor,

RE: Human Papillomavirus (HPV) infection in pregnant women and mother-to-child transmission of genital HPV genotypes: a prospective study in Spain

The authors submit an interesting article of importance in its field since several studies have explored whether HPVs can be vertically transmitted from mother to child by direct contact during labor, or horizontally and the risk of mother-to-child HPV transmission and have yielded inconsistent results.

Specific comments

METHODS

HPV-DNA detection and genotyping

"Samples hybridizing with the generic probe were also tested with probes for HPV 6, 11, 16, 18, 31, 33 and 39 specific probes." ? combined - which primers were used?

"Specimens were processed blindly to child or mother status and active measures to reduce the risk of cross contamination were implemented at the clinic and at the laboratory where the PCR was performed."

Since the authors conclude that there was a considerable percentage of horizontal spread, it would be of interest if they elaborate on "..active measures.." and if they followed up if the women were at all taking them.

RESULTS

Baseline characteristics of subjects in the cohort

"Table 2 summarizes the cytological results in the mother and the HPV results in mothers and infants at different timepoints during follow-up. Of the 143 pregnant women included in the cohort, 46.2% tested positive for HPV-DNA during pregnancy."
HPV persistence in mothers and infants

Comment on discrepancies between HPV test and Pap smear and severity of cytological abnormality and HPV vertical transmission rate. Was there any association found between mothers’ cytological status at pregnancy and children’s HPV status at any of the visits combined.

DISCUSSION

"First, we found that up to 16.9% of children born to HPV-negative mothers had HPV infections in the first 24 months of life. This percentage is only slightly higher, and not statistically significantly different, than that observed in infants born to HPV positive mothers (19.7%)."

Add a comment on the impact of your data regarding percent of horizontal transmission on the potential usefullness of elective caesarian section as an attempt to prevent neonatal HPV transmission.

Sincerely yours
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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 competing interests’