Reviewer's report

Title: Anal cytological abnormalities and correlates among men who have sex with men at risk for HIV-1 infection

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Reviewer: Alcina Nicol

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The article entitled “Anal cytological abnormalities and correlates among men who have sex with men at risk for HIV-1 infection” by Maria Gabriella Dona; Maria Gabriella Dona’, Maria Benevolo, Amina Vocaturo, Guido Palamara, Alessandra Latini, Amalia Giglio, Francesca Rollo, Giampaolo Impara, Fabrizio Ensoli, Fulvia Pimpinelli, Aldo Di Carlo and Massimo Giuliani.

The present study showed that about one third of the relatively young HIV-uninfected MSM enrolled had anal cytological abnormalities. In addition, more than half of the whole population was infected by HR-HPV genotypes. Abnormal cytological findings were not significantly associated with any of the socio-demographic and behavioral factors analyzed.

The work seems to have been carefully done, and the observation is an interesting one. The work is primarily descriptive and correlative, with the possibility of being further developed in a mechanistic direction.

The claims are properly placed in the context of the previous literature. The experimental data support the claims. The manuscript is written clearly enough that most of it is understandable to non-specialists.

The authors have provided adequate proof for their claims.

The paper offers enough details of methodology so that the experiments could be reproduced.

Questions and comments to the authors:

There is any information regarding previous HPV vaccination by any participants; please could the authors inform something regarding it on the Methods.

In spite of the authors pointed out the weaknesses of their work. On the last paragraph – discussion section, the authors claimed that additional investigations, including HRA with biopsy of abnormal findings are needed in individuals with anal cytological changes to assess the actual rate of high grade AIN. Then, Have the authors any plans to follow up those individuals in further study?

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