Author’s response to reviews

Title: Osteopontin, asbestos exposure and pleural plaques: a cross-sectional study

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Author’s response to reviews: see over
Dear Editor,

I hereby re-submit the final version of the manuscript: “Osteopontin, asbestos exposure and pleural plaques: a cross-sectional study”, by Mastrangelo et al., which has been reviewed according to the recommendations of both referees.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Best Wishes.

Dr. Luca Cegolon, MD, FFPH
Corresponding Author
Comment 1
The introduction concerning the modalities of estimating asbestos exposure can be reduced in length
Answer
Revised accordingly.

Comment 2
There is no quantitative data concerning smoking included (for both current and ex smokers), the fact that there is only a small number of actual smokers does not limit the analysis.
Answer
We introduced some extra information in this respect in Results.

Comment 3
The Abstract can in my opinion be shortened and rewritten the number of cases in the abstract is not the same with those in the paper: The discussion section in the abstract is more a conclusion
Answer
Revised accordingly. In particular, there were 192 workers that agreed to be examined, 8 additional newly examined workers, and 7 subjects with missing values that were discarded. Therefore the final number of study subjects was 193 (=192+8-7).

Comment 4
The data concerning the comparison of the two different assays kit should either be completely removed or entirely presented; a spearman rank correlation of 0.61 is low for such a correlation, restricting correlations to only 12 samples in low part of the calibration curve is not acceptable.
Answer
The data concerning the comparison of the two different assays kit were completely removed (see please Method and Material, section Plasma samples and Osteopontin ELISA assay); the correspondence between R&D and Assay designs methods in a larger cohort of patients in a our future study.

Comment
In the original comments I have suggested to include a discussion about the fact that osteopontin may be subjected to several modification and cleavage and that the use of different assay kit may give different osteopontin values. The authors included the discussion along with a whole paragraph citing our work WHICH WAS NOT the intend of the remark; therefore the above mentioned paragraph should be shortened and reference to reviewer’s papers can be removed at author’s discretion.
Answer
We shortened this paragraph as recommended by the reviewer (see please Discussion section, fifth paragraph). Moreover, we decided to keep the reference by Constantinescu et al. to underline the possibility that the discrepancy between osteopontin levels from our study and levels found by Vondermark et al. could be attributed to a systematic bias between two ELISA Kits.

Thank you for your comments.

Dr. Luca Cegolon, MD, FFPH
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FOR REVIEWER 2

Comment
The authors could pay attention to this and probably omit Fig. 4. The illustrations are redundant

Answer
Revised accordingly (figure 4 removed)

Thank you for your comment.

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