Reviewer's report

Title: Sexual behaviour and risk factors for the acquisition of human papillomavirus infections in young people in Italy: suggestions for future vaccination policies

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Reviewer: Francesco Vitale

Reviewer's report:

This paper reports an interesting analysis on sexual behaviours and risk factors for the acquisition of Human Papilloma Virus infection conducted on 7,298 young people resident of five major Italian cities.

The topic of this article is of importance in this field in terms of sample size (at a national level) but also for addressing the promotion of multi-cohort HPV vaccination strategies.

Overall, the text appears well written with clearly stated objectives and correct methodology, however some points must be discussed as minor essential revisions.

1. In the results section (page 8 line 11) the authors identify "regular sexual activity" as significant parameter reported in table 2 that increase significantly by age in both sexes (page 8 lines 15-16).

However in the text there is not a definition of what the authors mean for "regular sexual activity". Hence, in my opinion, the meaning of "regular sexual activity" should be stated in the section methods and this would improve the understanding of the study's results.

2. I suggest to report in the text how many subjects declared never have had sexual intercourses at the moment of participation into the study, because this data is only inferable in table 2 but it is related to those classified as "regular sexual activity".

3. I understand that the journal has no limits as for the number of tables presented, however in my opinion there are too many tables that ultimately get an excessive break-up of the results. I suggest to reduce the number of tables describing in the text the content of table 1 and try to consolidate in just one table the results showed in table 2 and 3.

4. In the text and also in tables the subject's lower age class is always reported as 14-16 without any mention to ages below 14. However, in table 4 are suddenly reported the lifetime sexual partners for both sexes in age 11-13. I understand the importance to analyse this context although it sounds a bit confusing and need, in my opinion, to be better described in the text. Moreover, in table 4 it seems that a total of 1330 females and 598 males between 11-15 years old declared to have had a sexual debut, however in table 2 only 689 females and 337 males reported "regular sexual activity" in the age class 14-16.
Therefore these data also need to be better clarified in the text.

**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