Reviewer’s report

Title: Prevalence study of Legionella spp. contamination in ferries and cruise ships

Version: 1 Date: 14 February 2006

Reviewer: Christian Lueck

Reviewer’s report:

General

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

The manuscript presented contained a few new data that might be published. However the present form of the manuscript needs careful revision and improvement before the paper can be accepted.

Major points are:
Please give details how the water was sampled. It was stated that water was sampled twice. What was the difference in the Legionella count between both sampling periods? How many samples were collected on each ship? Accordingly - how many samples per ship were positive? This is more interesting and important in terms of risk assessment than the summarized sampling sites in the table.
In the results section it is stated that that 77% of the samples contained >10 000 Legionella per litre which is supposed to be the critical level. How many samples contained >100 000/ litre?
Legionella isolates were typed by using a commercially available agglutination kit. However, this test is unable to define serogroups 3, 5, ore 6 as well as L. micdadei. Please state clearly how the strains were differentiated. Since water samples might contain more than one species or serogroup it must be state how many colonies per sample were investigated.
Please comment on the fact that no serogroup 1 strains were detected, which seems to be surprisingly, since this serogroup is the most common serogroup in clinical and environmental samples in many reports.
The data presented in Fig. 1 are given in the text – thus the fig can be omitted.
Surprisingly, there were no positive cultures in samples from 41-60°C. More details must be given or this interval of temperature since water at 40-45 °C often contains high numbers of Legionella.
Finally, please state clearly what kind of risk assessment / and or prevention should be carried out.
State exactly what is recommended in the Italian as well as in the European guidelines.

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published
Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests