Reviewer's report

Title: The Epidemiology of VZV Infection in Italy

Version: 2 Date: 4 March 2008

Reviewer: Peter Wutzler

Reviewer's report:

Major points:
The manuscript addresses the epidemiology of varicella and zoster in Italy by different data sources. Furthermore, the seroprevalence of VZV in child and adult population of northern, central and southern Italy was determined and compared with data obtained in 1996. However, the results are not sufficiently new for the readership of an internationally renowned journal since these findings confirm data published previously by the same author in 2001. Nevertheless, the data can be of interest for the national vaccination policy in Italy. Therefore, the paper can be considered for publication in a national medical journal after it was shortened considerably.

Minor points:
The statistical analysis does not consider samples with equivocal results that have to be re-tested using FAMA. In addition, the 95% confidence intervals were not added.

Results confirmed a clear north-south gradient with the highest incidence of varicella in northern Italy followed by central and then southern Italy. The authors need to discuss the reasons for these differences.

What next?: Reject because too small an advance to publish

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.