Reviewer's report

Title: Cross Sectional Analysis of Respiratory Symptoms in an Injection Drug User Cohort: The Impact of Obstructive Lung Disease and HIV

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Reviewer: Nicola Petrosillo

Reviewer's report:

The manuscript deals with an important issue in the management of HIV infected individuals in the era of the highly active antiretroviral treatment, i.e. the problem of chronic diseases. Among them, COPD is an important clinical problem among smokers, and HIV+ individuals, especially if IDU, are often heavy smokers, as confirmed by this article. In this cohort study, comparing IDU pts with/out HIV regarding obstructive pulmonary disease status, the conclusion is that there is a combined effect of obstructive lung disease (OLD) and HIV on worsening dyspnea scores in this IDU cohort, but highest degree of dyspnea are indepent on HIV status and depend only by (OLD).

Of course there are some limitation in this study, some of them declared by the authors (first of all cross-sectional design) However there are some points to be discussed:

1. this is a cohort of IDUs that could not represent the real population of IDU in the geographical area of the authors. Maybe these IDU subjects are those more compliant with medical care, or they have a better life habit, or whatever that could bias their attitude to develop a worse OLD. How are they enrolled in this cohort?

2. The subpopulation of HIV infected individuals in this cohort is represented by individuals with a relatively high median CD4 cells count, that means that they are in better conditions than other HIV+ IDUs not represented in this cohort. On the other side, only 54.6% were receiving HAART, while more than 55% had high HIVviremia levels. The authors should give more explanations on their immunological status.

3. There is no description of cardiac conditions of these individuals. Of note, dyspnoea could be related to pulmonary hypertension in HIV infected individuals. Has a cardiological evaluation been performed in these individuals?

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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

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