Reviewer’s report

Title: Lung function decline in relation to diagnostic criteria for airflow obstruction in COPD in respiratory symptomatic subjects

Version: 2 Date: 21 November 2011

Reviewer: Marco Contoli

Reviewer’s report:

I thank the authors for having addressed my criticisms. From my personal point of view some concerns still remain. In particular, the authors cannot specifically characterise study population in term of asthmatic and/or COPD patients. For this reason the term COPD cannot be used in the title.

Moreover, and even more importantly, it must be more clearly stated in the title (e.g. “Lung function decline in relation to disease severity and diagnostic criteria for airflow obstruction in respiratory symptomatic subjects”) and addressed in the manuscript that “discordant subjects” are significantly milder (in term of FEV1% predicted) compared to “obstructed patients”. Therefore it cannot be excluded that the conclusion of the study - i.e. more steeper lung function in concordant vs discordant patients - could simply reflect the severity of the underlying disease. Alternatively, to provide that LLN can better predict lung function decline, the authors must reanalyse the date comparing concordant and discordant subjects matched for age.

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests