Reviewer’s report

Title: The Lactobacillus flora in vagina and rectum of fertile and postmenopausal healthy Swedish women

Version: 2 Date: 7 March 2011

Reviewer: Urban Forsum

Reviewer’s report:

Major compulsatory revision
Two major concerns remain with the paper:
1.
My critique:
"""page 4, line 5."Twenty healthy fertile women". this is a problematic statement if not qualified by explicit reference to observations/examinations (structured clinical data and results of i.e. Amsel or Nugent scores). If this kind of data was not collected it is a major weakness in the study design.""
resulted in the following action by the authors:
"Reply: The subjects were examined by a basic clinical examination to exclude disease. A gynaecological examination including PAP smear and smear for a bacterial culture were carried out. All patients had normal cytology and a normal bacterial flora. This is now mentioned in the manuscript, page 4, line 7-10."
The reply and action by the authors does not address the real problem that there are no criteria or other definition in the description of the basic set of patient that defines the included women as healthy with respect to genital (including STI) ailments. This is a major weakness of the study that affects the conclusions and usefulness of the outcome of the study. In fact undermines the statement that the study concerns “healthy Swedish women”.
2.
In the revised manuscript the following statement is introduced"The present results did not support that differences in rectal flora could explain the increased prevalence of bacterial vaginosis in postmenopausal women.” Bacterial Vaginosis is a condition affecting otherwise healthy women of fertile age according to most authorities on the subject. The newly introduced statement and discussion based on the statement in the revised manuscript thus should be modified or deleted."
Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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'