Reviewer’s report

Title: High genital prevalence of cutaneous human papillomavirus DNA on male genital skin: The HPV Infection in Men Study

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Reviewer: Chris JLM Meijer

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This is a inventorising study in which the authors describe the prevalence of individual HPV types among genital HPV unclassified specimens collected earlier in men participating in the “HPV infection in men study” running in USA, Mexico and Brasil. Typing was done by 1. sequencing PCR amplimers or cloned amplicons of PGMY09/11 primers 2. Nested PCR using GP5+/6+ primers on PGMY9/11 negative amplimers followed by sequencing of the amplicons and 3. nested PGMY09/11-GP5+/6+ PCR negative samples using amplification using FAP59/64 primers followed by direct sequencing of the amplimers. Results were related with socio-demographic and behavioral characteristics The results show that 66% of the originally unclassified specimen showed readable sequences with characterised (77%) and yet uncharacterised (23%) HPV types. Most of the characterised types were beta HPV types (73%) followed by alpha HPV types(20%) and gamma HPV types. Alpha HPV types were associated with smoking. No other socio-demographic or behavioral characteristics could be demonstrated. Among the alpha HPV types HPV types were present which should have been found in the original typing procedure. They were probably missed due to very low viral load as these were only demonstrated by nested PCR.

Comments

The paper is well written, techniques well described, and conclusions carefully drawn,

1 As the authors describe the significance of these beta HPV types on the penis is not clear. This might have been partly cleared if the authors had used in these men a non-genital skin control for beta HPV types detection or had presented data on the prevalence of beta HPV types in a subset of specimen of the original study which showed a positive HPV typing result. These beta HPV prevalence data might have shed light on the significance of the present findings. The lack of relationship with socio-demographic and behavioral characteristics underlines this

If these data can be providedit would strengthen the paper.

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

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests: no competing interest