Reviewer's report

Title: Increasing prevalence of HIV infection among first time clients in Italian drug treatment services: is it sexual transmission?

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Reviewer: Elena Raffetti

Reviewer's report:

GENERAL COMMENTS
In their paper Cruciani and colleagues investigate the prevalence of HIV and hepatitis C infection among patients taken in care by Italian drug treatment service. The main strength of this study is that it enrolls all patients presenting for care to drug treatment service located throughout Italy from 2005 to 2011. The main weakness is that only aggregate data have been described in results section. Important bias cannot be excluded. English throughout the paper could be improved.

Major Compulsory Revisions
1. This study may be of interest. However, the information content of the paper is modest, since only the proportion of HIV and HCV positive in people using drug is reported. Furthermore, the data regarding the last year of the study (2001) are not in line with those of the previous year. For instance, the proportion of HIV patients is more than half compared to previous year. The linear trend of HIV and HCV positive should be recalculated after having excluded the last year.
2. Moreover, due to the high percentage of missing data on the prevalence of HIV and HCV infection, the results could be affected of bias. The reason for observations being missing still depends on the unseen observations themselves. In order to reduce the impact of missing data, methods as inverse probability weight could be used.
3. The paragraph in the results section “Among registered clients in 2011, 79.8%....(22.8% among new clients, and 67.3% among the overall population)” could be delete since it is not useful to the aim of the study

Minor revision
1. Please, add page numbers to the manuscript;
2. I suggest to use 3 decimal points in p value;
3. I suggest to use consistently Tab., table or Table., and Fig. or Figure;
4. Figure 1 report the same data showing in Table 1, I suggest to delete the Figure 1.

Discretionary Revisions
1. I suggest to describe the results on HCV/HIV co-infection if available.
**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests