Reviewer's report

**Title:** Unified Treatment Algorithm for the Management of Crotaline Snakebite in the United States: Results of an Evidence-Informed Consensus Workshop

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 3 September 2010

**Reviewer:** Jean-Philippe Chippaux

**Reviewer's report:**

The paper by Lavonas et al. “Unified treatment algorithm for the management of crotaline snakebite in the United States: Results of an evidence-informed consensus workshop” proposed a standardization of crotaline bite management using CroFab® antivenom. It is a very important and useful effort to improve the treatment of envenomations. Delphi methodology is appropriate for this purpose and procedures seem to have been followed correctly.

Although results, based on updated literature, are likely to be reasonable, some general considerations on methods are debatable. For example, I do not understand why the main different clinical presentations could not be defined in advance and as a consequence “a standardized evidence-based rule development process, such as that proposed by the GRADE working group, cannot be used”. However, I think that it is relatively simple to anticipate and classify different forms of clinical presentation that crotaline envenomations may have.

Some other aspects of the algorithm concern speculative assessments (although consensual!) regarding indication or doses of antivenom.

Finally, as assumed by the authors, snake envenomation is a dynamic clinical process. Consequently a clinical and/or biological gradation of the envenomation could be very useful in treatment indication and monitoring… Although grading scales for crotaline envenomation have not been validated, such tools should be very useful for the evaluation of the envenomation severity and treatment management.

Most of decisions suggested by the algorithm are based on subjective criteria which should better be replaced by quantitative and hierarchical criteria such as clinical grades or biological tests indicating improvement, stability or worsening of envenomation. For example, a change –or not– of clinical grades, is a very useful criterion for guiding the treatment as well as the measurement of creatine phosphokinase or intra-compartmental pressure in the indication of fasciotomy.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests