Reviewer's report

Title: Crotaline Fab antivenom is effective in cases of severe North American pit viper envenomation: a integrative review

Version: 2 Date: 29 April 2009

Reviewer: Ken Winkel

Reviewer's report:

This useful paper addresses an important gap in the literature concerning the place of CroFab in the context of the treatment of severe north American crotalid envenomation. It does not overstate its findings (although I suggest a slight change in the title would be appropriate - see below) and clearly demarcates most of the limitations of the methodology. It is well written and incorporates the key issues in the relevant background literature.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. The title suggests a level of precision that is not absolutely possible with this type of audit (as stated by the authors themselves)(specifically the definitive "...is effective..."). I suggest that the title be changed to "...appears to be effective...".

2. Can the authors be sure that no cases were duplicated between different studies? It is stated that 'duplicated reports' were excluded from the analysis but does this mean the included cases could not represent the same individuals? This is not entirely clear from a quick examination of the case list in Table 3. It would be helpful if the authors could eliminate the ambiguity.

3. Under the heading "Recurrence or delayed onset of severe venom effects", it should read "...was reported" not "...were reported" on p11.

Discretionary Revisions

1. Some additional comments on future studies to obviate the limitations of this study would be useful. Personally I would be surprised if the investigators did not have access to larger numbers of high quality prospectively collected national data on severe crotalid cases. Due to the small case numbers and methodological limitations this paper really shouldn't stand as the ultimate report on the treatment of severe crotalid envenomation. Nonetheless it is an appropriate starting point for more definitive studies.

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:

I declare that I have no competing interests