Reviewer's report

Title: Herpes encephalitis presenting as mild aphasia

Version: 1 Date: 13 January 2006

Reviewer: Andreas Sauerbrei

Reviewer’s report:

General comments:
Herpes simplex encephalitis (HSE) is an uncommon illness and many general practitioners or clinicians do not see patients with symptoms of this severe infectious disease. But they should be aware that this encephalitis has a fatality rate of around 70% if there is no early diagnosis and antiviral treatment. Therefore, this type of simple and short case report presenting an atypical clinical course of a patient with HSE should be welcomed for publication. However, the authors have to be cope with the following points of criticism and there is the need of minor essential revisions.

Detailed evaluation:
Abstract, last sentence. This sentence should be changed to “The case is instructive for general practitioners and clinicians to maintain vigilance for central nervous system (CNS) infections which may present atypically.” HSE does not represent a “cerebrospinal fluid infection”. Herpes simplex virus (HSV) infects the tissue of the frontal and/or temporal lobes of the brain. Thus, the detection of complete viral particles in cerebrospinal fluid has generally met with limited success.
Case presentation, paragraph 5, line 4. “Magnetic resonance imaging” must be followed by “(MRI)”.
Case presentation, paragraph 6, line 3. “...Herpes simplex virus (HSV-1)” should be replaced by “...Herpes simplex virus type 1 (HSV-1)”.
Conclusion, lines 6-7. The sentence describing the antiviral treatment of HSE has to be referenced. For better understanding, a figure showing MRI findings should be added.

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.