Reviewer’s report

Title: Foodborne norovirus outbreak: the role of an asymptomatic food handler

Version: 1 Date: 4 February 2010

Reviewer: David Allen

Reviewer’s report:

Reviewer’s Report
Reviewer David J Allen

Manuscript Foodborne Norovirus Outbreak: The Role of an Asymptomatic Foodhandler

Date 03 February 2010

General Comments
In the paper Foodborne Norovirus Outbreak: The Role of an Asymptomatic Foodhandler, Barrabeig et al discuss an outbreak of gastroenteritis at a summer camp in Barcelona, Spain. Through a retrospective cohort study and laboratory analysis of patient samples, Barrabeig et al identify a GII-2 norovirus as the aetiological agent of the outbreak. Furthermore, the authors discuss the role of food and foodhandlers from a lunchtime meal served at the camp in the outbreak.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author may choose to ignore)

Minor Essential Revisions (which the author can be trusted to correct)
1. Page 3 – revise grammatical sense of last line of Laboratory Investigation section in Results ["Two suspected foods should…laboratory analysis.”].

2. Page 5 – change label from “Taula 1” to “Table 1”.

3. Page 7 – revise grammatical sense of the last paragraph of the Discussion section ["In an investigation…implemented according to.”]

4. Table 1 – in each of the sections of Table 1 (Ate and Did not eat) two columns are labelled “Number of ill”. Should one of these labels be the total number of people and the other label the number of people ill?

Major Compulsory Revisions (to which the author must respond before a decision on publication)

1. The numbers of people quoted as having eaten beef or paella and subsequently becoming ill are different in the results section (page 7) and in Table 1. Although the quoted attack rates match between the results and the table, the numbers in Table 1 do not correspond to the attack rate figure
presented therein.

2. Can the authors demonstrate whether people ate only beef, only paella, both or neither? This would help clarify the discussion where the authors comment that all persons with symptoms of gastroenteritis had eaten beef, but the results section and Table 1 show people eating paella also had symptoms of gastroenteritis. Does this mean only people who ate only beef or both paella and beef had gastroenteritis? If so, this is not clear from the data presented.

3. What was the time lag between the occurrence of the outbreak and collection of the samples from patients? Could this have affected the results in any way?

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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

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

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare I have no competing interests.