Reviewer’s report

Title: Parvovirus B19 infection and severe anaemia in Kenyan children: a retrospective case control study

Version: 2 Date: 9 October 2009

Reviewer: Thomas Tolfvenstam

Reviewer’s report:

J Wildig and coauthors has assessed the contribution of parvovirus B19 induced anaemia in children with severe anaemia in a district hospital setting in Kenya. The topic is well defined and important and the same authors has previously found B19 to be strongly associated to severe anemia in another malaria-endemic area (Papua New Guinea). The manuscript is well written, methods well established and the discussion clearly states the limitations of the study. The major drawback of the study is that the population assessed seems to have an unusually low seroprevalence of B19, and may not be representative of children in tropical areas in general, where B19 seroprevalence has been found higher than in temperate areas. The low presence of B19 has prevented the authors from establishing a significant association between B19 IgM and severe anemia although with more cases and controls the findings from PNG would probably have been repeated in this setting.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. Figure 1. State what the error bars represent.

2. Why weren't all samples tested by PCR?

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests