Reviewer's report

Title: Epidemiological characteristics and societal burden of Varicella Zoster Virus in the Netherlands

Version: 1 Date: 9 November 2011

Reviewer: Scott Schmid

Reviewer's report:

Pierik and coauthors have used data obtained through national public health database registries in the Netherlands to build a retrospective cohort for the analysis of varicella and herpes zoster incidence in the Netherlands, and additionally to determine incidence rates for specific complications of each of those diseases. This is really quite an elegant piece of work. It is likely to provide valuable guidance for policy decisions regarding the use of varicella and zoster vaccines in the Netherlands and in Europe.

I have no major recommendations for revision. There are occasionally misused words or misspellings, but in general this is a well-written manuscript reflecting a carefully thought-out and executed study.

One minor point is that the authors might consider adding information to the discussion comparing incidence rates HZ in the Netherlands with published information in Europe and elsewhere, as they've done for varicella.

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

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