Reviewer's report

Title: A case of granulomatous hepatitis due to Bartonella henselae infection

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Reviewer: Jean-Marc Rolain

Reviewer's report:

The manuscript from VanderHeyden et al describes a putative granulamatous hepatitis due to Bartonella henselae in an immunocompetent woman. Although the topic is of interest since there are only few reports on this infection, data provided are not sufficient to eventually demonstrate that this infection was due to B henselae. In fact a sample of formalin-fixed liver tissue was firstly addressed to the University of Arkansas where a positive signal (no explanation of what it means?) targeting a 153bp of the 16S rRNA gene was obtained. To eventually prove that this sample was PCR positive, authors should both sequence this PCR product and deposit the retrieved sequence and also try to confirm this result using a second PCR targeting a different gene. Moreover, usually from such tissue sample, diagnosis should be achieved using Whartin-Starry staining as well as Immunohistochemistry. A second biopsy from the same patient was analyzed at the University of Washington with again a positive signal (what does it mean?) with primers targeting ribC gene. Authors should also sequence this PCR product to be sure that this B henselae and test this sample in a second run of PCR targeting a different gene. Finally, authors have used venous blood samples from this patient and found using a conventional PCR targeting 16S-23S intergenic spacer that the sample was PCR positive after enrichment culture although the PCR was negative directly from the sample before enrichment culture? Why authors have not used a set of 2 or 3 different primers targeting different genes (16S-23S, ribC and 16S for example) for the two biopsy samples? Why sequences are not provided? Without these data one cannot discard the possibility of a false positive PCR due to laboratory contamination since no B henselae isolate was retrieved from these biopsies.

Finally, the format of the manuscript is not good, it seems to be a review in the background section (more than 4 pages) although this is a case report.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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'