Reviewer's report

Title: Necrotizing fasciitis caused by Haemophilus influenzae type b in a patient with rectal cancer treated with bevacizumab: a case report

Version: 2  Date: 11 March 2014

Reviewer: Catriona Chalmers

Reviewer's report:

Summary: this case report is generally well-written and 'readable', and will be of interest at least to those working within the field of oncology. It could be improved with some additions to the clinical detail and referencing, as described below.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. Within the case report itself, we need to know whether this patient had any other risk factors for necrotising fasciitis - e.g. diabetes, use of steroids or NSAIDs. This could be achieved by including a brief medical history and relevant drug history, or stating at some point that there were no other identifiable risk factors. Without this detail your link to bevacizumab becomes more tenuous.

2. It is unclear from the description whether the patient was taken to theatre for debridement, which was only completed on receipt of an intra-operative biopsy/frozen section, or whether biopsy was undertaken prior to the decision to operate. This should be made clear, ideally along with some indication of the timeframe from admission to debridement. This is important since it is recommended not to delay debridement while awaiting microbiological samples, and given the patient's ultimate successful outcome (suggesting speedy treatment).

3. The second paragraph of the discussion begins: 'In a comprehensive safety review conducted by Roche......'. A reference is required for this information - there is none at present.

4. In the same paragraph, the second sentence ('The majority of the patients described in case reports.....') is referenced by a single case report (ref 4). I have not been able to gain access to the full-text version of that article, which may in turn reference other case reports. However, I would suggest using a reference (or references) which more clearly supports the statement.

Discretionary Revisions

1. The case report itself would read better with the addition of some paragraph spacing.

2. It is unusual to need such a long course of antibiotics (51 days) for a surgically-debrided soft tissue infection. Was there a reason for this which would add to the interest of the case?
Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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.