Reviewer's report

Title: Evaluation of seven serological assays for diagnosis of tularemia

Version: 1 Date: 7 January 2014

Reviewer: Heinrich Neubauer

Reviewer's report:

The question posed by the authors is well defined. The methods are appropriate and well described. The data are sound. The manuscript does adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition. The discussion and conclusions are balanced and adequately supported by the data. The limitations of the work have to be described in more detail. The authors clearly acknowledge the work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished. The title and abstract accurately convey what has been found. The writing is acceptable.

Major Compulsory Revisions
1. The authors have to explain why they have not used more sera for calculating specificity.
2. It has to be discussed why the results of those positive sera with a volume not sufficient to be tested in all tests have been used for calculation of sensitivity. It is adviceable to exclude these sera from the calculations at all or to improve the table by giving the full set of data for the sake of transparency.
3. The authors have to explain why they included obviously couples of sera from patients for calculation of sensitivity.

Minor essential revisions
1. line 40: please explain 'dangerous to handle'.
2. line 45: remove sentence 'nine patients.....'
3. line 90: the sentence should read 'in nine Serbian patients other diseases were diagnosed.....' The information 'tularemia was not confirmed' is misleading.
4. line 153: explain why a dilution of 1:100 was used.
5. line 164: explain what 'characterised sera' means.
6. line 205: explain the difference between sensitivity and diagnostic sensitivity.
7. line 211: remove (especially early in the course of infection). This assumption is not proved by the data shown.
8. line 223: explain 'diagnostic sensitivity'.
9. line 240: explain why this test is preferable when testing sera 'early after infection'.
10. line 250: this sentence is not correct.
Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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 that I have no competing interests'