Reviewer's report

Title: Seroprevalence of toxoplasmosis among veterinary staff: Implications for teratogenic risk

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Reviewer: Eskild Petersen

Level of interest: not specified

Advice on publication: Other (see below)

Shuhaiber et al.
Seroprevalence of toxoplasmosis among veterinary staff: Implications for teratogenic risk.

The paper report the results of a study among veterinary staff attending the 2002 Annual Ontario Veterinary Medical Association Conference.

General comments. The authors obtained 161 questionnaires from the 999 participants or 16.6%. I miss a discussion of the low response rate and whether those who participated could be considered to be representative of the groups as a whole.

It seems that the response rate among veterinary technicians was better compared to the veterinarians, and the reason for this needs to be discussed.

The results sections contain percentages but need to give p values or confidence intervals whenever comparing proportions between groups and this also apply to table 1 and 2.

Specific comments.

1. The term "teratogenic" is not usually used for damages due to congenital infections. Teratogenic imply an influence on the developing foetus before the 16 gestational week, and the signs and symptoms in congenital toxoplasmosis are due to the pathology the infection induces in the tissues.

2. I need a discussion of whether the NHANES data are comparable to the situation around Ontario. Seroprevalence of toxoplasma is depending on the climate decreasing as one move north, which means that US data can not without comments be used for Canada. The Toronto data cited is probably the best data to compare with.

3. In the methods section the selection of the participants needs to be discussed. One could suspect a selection bias where those who thought they were most exposed to Toxoplasma were more likely to be tested, thus over-estimating the prevalence (and the risk) among veterinarians and their staff.

4. In the results section the difference between the veterinarians expected to have a positive titer was 7.4% (57.4% versus 50%) which must be (73/126 and 17/35). In my calculations there is no statistical difference between these two groups but the authors cite a p value of

Competing interests:
None declared.