Reviewer's report

Title: Improved primers for the detection and identification of human enterovirus 71 by RT PCR

Version: 1 Date: 24 February 2004

Reviewer: Bart Rombaut

Reviewer's report:

General
The authors describe a RT PCR specific for enterovirus 71, which can be used as a screening tool in surveillance programmes for early warning of human enterovirus 71 infections. To reach this goal the authors designed an improved set of primers, leading to specific identification of human enterovirus 71.
Although this is not a world striking event, this report can be very useful for everybody working in this research field.
The methods were carefully designed and the results are straight forward.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
The only criticism I have, is the fact that on the first page (p.3) of the Background section there is not any reference present. A reference to virus classification (ICTV 7), the association of HFMD with coxsackievirus A16 and the association now with enterovirus 71, deserves a reference, but I trust that the authors can easily insert some references.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

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What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
none