Reviewer's report

Title: Meningitis due to Fusobacterium necrophorum in an Adult

Version: 3 Date: 16 May 2004

Reviewer: Allan Tunkel

Reviewer's report:

General

The authors describe a case of Fusobacterium necrophorum meningitis, with a right ear infection the likely source. This organism is an unusual cause of bacterial meningitis, with only one case in the adult population.

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

1. I am intrigued by the exceptionally high CSF WBC count of 338,400 cells per cubic millimeter. This is very unusual in patients with bacterial meningitis (the usual count is 1000-5000). Despite the initial negative CT of the head, it may be that the initial process was a brain abscess, that included this organism, which then ruptured into the subarachnoid space (likely into one of the ventricles). Did the authors consider this and were other neuroimaging studies performed at initial presentation?

2. Could the authors supply more clinical information that led to his initial presentation? They only give the history and suddenly his presents in a lethargic state. What was the time course of this illness?

3. I am interested in the rationale for the antimicrobial change to ceftazidime, levofloxacin, and metronidazole. Especially for levofloxacin, there is no data for its use in central nervous system infections.

4. Did the patient have an autopsy? I would add that information and the results, if available.

5. In the discussion, I would add information on the isolation of Fusobacterium necrophorum from other CNS infections, especially brain abscesses.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

1. When describing WBC counts in CSF, it should be listed as cells per cubic millimeter.

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the
major compulsory revisions

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No

**Declaration of competing interests:**

None