Reviewer's report

Title: Streptococcal necrotising fasciitis from diverse strains of Streptococcus pyogenes in tropical northern Australia: case series and comparison with the literature

Version: 1 Date: 30 September 2004

Reviewer: Anna Norrby-Teglund

Reviewer's report:

General
The study describes the epidemiology, clinical and laboratory features of 14 consecutive cases of NF caused by group A streptococci treated over a seven year period from tropical northern Australia.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
None

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. Abstract, results, first sentence: It is not clear what previous publications the authors are referring to, incidence rates in the Aboriginal population or what? Please also see comment 4 below regarding incidence rate discussion.

2. Results, page 10, line 7: “Two received clindamycin…” According to table 1, only one of the fatal cases received clindamycin.

3. Discussion, page 13: The report by Mulla ZD 2003 on clindamycin and reduced mortality in NF patients should be discussed, especially in relation to the above point that 2-3 of the fatal cases had not received clindamycin.

4. The authors report a higher incidence rate than previously published rates. However, the authors focus on the maximum incidence rate that occurred in year 2001 and compares this to the incidence rates reported from Canada and Norway. It seems relevant to include a sentence that the Canadian study was based on a population size of 10.9 million as compared to the present study of 135 000 population. Furthermore, to me it would seem more relevant to refer to this as a cluster of cases occurring in year 2001, rather than emphasising this as the incidence rate of NF in this region. In line with this, it would be informative to list the year of each patient in Table 1.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

1. Abstract, last sentence: I would suggest removing this sentence since this is not the objective of the present study.
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