Reviewer’s report

Title: Mechanisms of Escape Phenomenon of Spinal Cord and Brainstem in Human Rabies

Version: 1 Date: 5 October 2005

Reviewer: Anthony Fooks

Reviewer’s report:

The manuscript by Juntrakul et al entitled ‘Mechanisms of escape phenomenon of spinal cord and brainstem in human rabies’ describes the observations of fixed CNS tissue taken from ten rabies patients between 1987 – 2005. Of these patients, five showed the ‘furious’ form of rabies whilst the remaining presented with ‘paralytic’ rabies. The aim of this study was to measure transactivators of the apoptotic cascade and link this to the ‘escape phenomenon’ i.e. the reason that spinal cord dysfunction does not occur in all rabies patients. These data reported in this manuscript is a development of on-going studies within the same laboratory. The manuscript is well written and the data is clearly presented however, specific aspects of the text and results still require further clarification with the addition of more data.

Specific points
1. Tables 2 and 3 are not user-friendly to the reader and could be improved.
2. The description of antigen positive and apoptotic cells requires additional description to avoid using a scale measurement (0 – 4), which is bias. I suggest that stained cells are included to indicate apoptotic staining and antigen distribution.
3. The authors’ need to clarify how cells were shown to be neuronal and not another cell type. Which specific cell markers were used?

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:

I have no competing interests in relation to this manuscript.