Reviewer's report

Title: Bacterial isolates from blood cultures of children with suspected septicaemia in Calabar Nigeria

Version: 1 Date: 14 April 2005

Reviewer: Shamez Ladhani

Reviewer's report:

1. Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined?

The question posed by the authors is not new, but is well-defined.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replicate the work?

Yes

3. Are the data sound and well controlled?

Yes

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?

Yes

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?

Yes

6. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?

Yes

7. Is the writing acceptable?

Yes, but contains quite a few grammatical errors that will need to be corrected before publication.

REVIEWER'S REPORT
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Meremikwu and colleagues have reported on the organisms isolated from blood samples from children with suspected septicaemia 6.5 years in Nigeria and their antimicrobial susceptibility. The authors found that almost half the blood cultures were positive, with S.aureus accounting for almost half the cases.

The article is well written and carries important messages: septicaemia is a common cause of febrile illnesses in children, even in areas where malaria is common. Furthermore, resistance to
commonly-used antibiotics is increasing.

However, these conclusions are well-known and have been previously reported in the literature. In addition, while it is important to know the pattern of organisms isolated and their antibiotic susceptibilities, these results are likely to be relevant to the local area where the study was performed only. I would hope, all good hospitals would be auditing their blood cultures to determine their local antibiotic prescribing policies.

MAJOR COMPULSORY REVISIONS

It would be useful to know the local antibiotic prescribing policies in children. How effective would they be when compared to the authors findings regarding the organisms isolated and their antimicrobial susceptibility pattern? Would the authors recommend a change in prescribing policy based on their results? It would be interesting to know whether in vitro antibiotic resistance correlates clinical failure of treatment, but this is clearly not the aim of this study.

MINOR ESSENTIAL REVISIONS

- Introduction

Page 4, Paragraph 1, Line 2: children with septicaemia present with fever, (not presents, and remove symptoms such as .)

Page 4, Paragraph 1, Line 4: the sentence following but those with symptomatic bacteraemia tend to show no obvious signs does not make sense.

Page 4, Paragraph 3, Line 2: suspected septicaemia, however, this lacks the should be changed to suspected septicaemia. However, they lack the

Page 4, Paragraph 1, Line 3: Please define takes a while

- Methods

Page 5, Paragraph 1, Line 1: the methods should simply state all consecutive blood cultures - the number of blood cultures should come in the Results section

Page 5, Paragraph 1, Line 3: features not feature

Page 5, Paragraph 1, Line 5: Please keep sentence in past tense, so that is and are become was and were

Page 6, Paragraph 1, Line 1: please remove reference details (Fine Gold et al, 1978)

- Results

Page 6, Paragraph 1, Line 2: sentence should read the patients are shown in Table 1

- Discussion
Page 7, Paragraph 3, Line 1: in vitro should be in italics without a hyphen
Page 7, Paragraph 3, Last Line: please remove reference details (antia-Obong, 1991)
Page 7, Paragraph 3, Last Line: what was the resistance level in the same hospital a decade ago?

Page 8, Paragraph 2, Line 2: Please leave space between A recent
Page 8, Paragraph 2, Last Line: please move sentence to previous line

- Conclusion

Page 8, Paragraph 1, Line 1: please remove the word again

- Table 1

2 mo-I yr should read -1 yr (i.e. one)

DISCRETIONARY REVISIONS

The authors should consider transforming some of their tables into graphs to add visual appeal.

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests