Reviewer's report

Title: Use of biokitHSV-2 Rapid Assay to Improve the Positive Predictive Value of Focus HerpeSelect HSV-2 ELISA

Version: 1 Date: 9 July 2005

Reviewer: jeff klausner

Reviewer's report:

General

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

Under Methods it states the BiokitHSV-2 was performed according to manufacturer's directions, yet each set of sera tested was accompanied by a test of a low positive control. One of the major limitations of the BiokitHSV-2 has been the poor discriminatory ability of the "read out" ie, is a light pink line really "there" or "not" ?
Is use of the low positive control specimen in accordance with manufacturer's directions? It seems not and this would limit the generalizability of the findings and the report and if it is not, it should be emphasized in the abstract and conclusions that the authors modified the BiokitHSV-2 to enhance performance.

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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)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

I find it difficult to synthesize the results when the findings are presented in duplicate in the text and Tables. One presentation of results is usually adequate and the authors are strongly suggested to combine data presentation using Tables, Figures and text as each has unique strengths.

The authors fail to provide a scientific rationale for the enhanced testing outcomes using the Focus + BiokitHSV-2 algorithm. Given the target gG2 is the same between assays are there differences in avidity, processing or other conditions that give the BiokitHSV-2 its discriminatory ability? Would duplicate Focus testing provide similar or different outcomes? Why not?

Finally, the recommendations of the authors are unclear. The findings support BiokitHSV-2 testing (with low positive controls) on low positives (1.1-3.5) not those > 3.5 but the authors do not clearly recommend the use of BiokitHSV-2 on that population only versus the use of BiokitHSV-2 on all positives (>1.1).
What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
I have no competing interests