Reviewer's report

Title: Pneumomediastinum as initial presentation of paralytic rabies: A case report

Version: 1 Date: 20 July 2005

Reviewer: Claudius Malerczyk

Reviewer's report:

General
The manuscript is a well-described case report of paralytic rabies. A publication is highly recommended, as this adds to awareness and will hopefully make physicians to include rabies in their differential diagnosis for cases like this. The paper consists of a few typographical errors that should be corrected before publication (see below).

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) The authors suggest using an unapproved "accelerated pre-exposure ID regimen for post-exposure prophylaxis. This may be confusing to the reader not from the field. The statement "It will result in an antibody response of >0.5 IU/mL by day 14" is likely but unproven and is not documented with scientific data. Unless such a new regimen is proven efficacious and/or immunogenic and either recommended by WHO or approved by National Regulatory Authorities, it should not be suggested. Instead, the WHO recommended PEP regimens should be considered, including the updated TRC regimen (reference: WHO technical report series 931). In addition, pre-exposure vaccination for health workers at risk of exposure may be recommended.

2) Background, line 17:
"Both donors had neurological and behavioral symptoms and signs consistent with rabies which were apparently disregarded..."
The sentence should be re-worded and the term 'apparently disregarded' should be avoided, as the reference cited by the authors clearly states: "In the organ donor who died of cardiac arrest, no signs indicative for rabies were present at the time of death."

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

1) Discussion, 6th paragraph:
The term "panic reactions" should be changed, as with a 100% fatal disease the staff's concern is understandable and should be taken serious.

2) typographical corrections:
- background, line 6: percent --> percentage
- background, line 18: Guillain Barre --> Guillain Barré
- case presentation, line 6: and was reported --> and he was reported
- case presentation, 5th paragraph: hypernatremia was was --> delete duplication
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:
The reviewer is employee of rabies vaccine manufacturer.