Reviewer’s report

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

Version: 1 Date: 2 September 2005

Reviewer: Thiravat Hemachudha

Reviewer’s report:

General
This case report illustrates how rabies can escape diagnosis even in a rabies experience medical center. Details in this case as well as those in the discussion part point out the pitfalls in diagnosis based on clinical grounds when not taking whole history and clinical examination to be analyzed in the same scenario. These are extremely important in areas or countries where rabies is endemic and sophisticated diagnostic facilities may not be available. Furthermore, this report should also be useful even in developed countries where physicians may not be aware of rabies or may not have much experience.

The case reported here emphasized the importance of both history taking and physical examination. Cardinal manifestations of rabies do not appear at all times. What usually fascinates people all over the world is the horrific picture of human rabies. However, this may not present in every case and may disappear at the time of admission. Moreover, some complications such as pneumomediastinum (as shown here) may distract the physicians from the primary or chief complaint of the patient, i.e., difficulty swallowing. This has already occurred in the States where the organ donor presented with only swallowing difficulties and subsequently lapsed into coma. Neuroimaging, although showing some abnormalities, might or might not explain the entire clinical picture. Similar incident also happened in Germany, thus, proving that there is no boundary for infectious disease.

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

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

It may be nicer to have a pointer to the air in the mediastinum in Figure 2 (Chest radiograph). However, if the resolution is fine, this may not be necessary.

What next?: Accept after discretionary revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests