Reviewer's report

Title: Clinical features and pitfalls in the laboratory diagnosis of dengue in travellers

Version:  1 Date: 23 March 2006
Reviewer: Maria G G Guzman

Reviewer's report:

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

General
In this manuscript, investigators evaluate the diagnostic value of a positive single specimen test result by a commercial ELISA in ill travelers. The topic is of interest considering the increase number of travelers to dengue endemic countries and the need of a simple algorithm for dengue diagnosis.

The evaluation of a diagnostic method needs to include solid criteria for the confirmation of the infection. Particularly in dengue, virus isolation, positive RT/PCR and the classical seroconversion or the fourfold increase in the antibody titer in a paired sera are accepted to confirm the infection (WHO, 1997).

From the results presented here, it is not easy to clearly and accurately define the positive or negative tested samples although a high number of specimens were tested and several tests employed. Also, it is not easy to follow obtained results.

3. Results:

Paragraphs 2 and 3: It is not clear how the infection was confirmed in 64/127 samples with a probable dengue infection. The 10 positive samples defined by high IgG antibody and the 4 with both IgG and IgM antibodies how were classified? These samples are included into the final 64 “confirmed” samples????

How it is possible to guarantee that negative samples are really negatives? Frequently, RT/PCR is negative and seroconversion is observed.

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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)

1. Introduction: could be shortened
2. Materials and methods: samples should be classified according the time of collection after disease onset
3. Results:
   Paragraph 1: Verify figures of origin of patients

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the
major compulsory revisions

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes

**Declaration of competing interests:**

'I declare that I have no competing interests'