Reviewer's report

Title: A retrospective study of central nervous system shunt infections diagnosed in a university hospital during a 4-year period

Version: 1 Date: 14 October 2005

Reviewer: Matthew J McGirt

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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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The authors present their experience with CNS shunt infections. With regard to the design of their study, their definition of shunt infection is too liberal. An elevated white count alone in a pt with a shunt does not constitute a shunt infection. nore does a fever alone, especially in children. I would recomend that instead of defining shunt infection as "any one of the following signs", I would define it as "any one of the following signs" in addition to a CSF profile suggestive of CSF infection (ie low glucose, gram stain postive, culture positive etc). I beleive that their observed shunt infection rate of >15% (much higher than published series in the literature) is a result of false classification of shunt infection. This is the only study design flaw.

The value of this paper is as a review of shunt infections. It offers no new novel data. I feel that it is publishable with the above mentioned changes, as long as the focus is on the discussion and more focus placed on literature review, perhaps adding a table of previously published organsisms etc..

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