Reviewer's report

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

Version: 4 Date: 28 December 2005

Reviewer: James Van Dellen

Reviewer's report:

General

In the tables suggest use - Post men. hydroceph. = Post meningitic hydrocephalus; Cong. hydrocephalus/MM = Congenital hydrocephalus/myelomeningocele

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

pp 4 line 1 'intracranial pressure monitoring and temporary' propose 'maintaining a specific intracranial pressure and generally permanent, but on occasion temporary,'

pp 4 line 5 is ventriculostomy associated incidence intended?

pp 5 lines 4,5 although the highest incidence period for infection is in the initial +/- 30 days, need to clarify the time frames which are being used, eg. early or late and then define time frames used lines 18,19,20 associated infections - these are very important and a higher incidence of shunt infection in such patients is not unusual and will provide a higher prevalence. Were the infections from the same infective organism? this may well change the prevalence of unusual organisms reported in this series (also pp8 lines 9-12). What were the organisms re. cerebral abscesses (pp 6 line 1), and where were these located - supra- or infra-tentorial re risk of infection.

Equally important would be defining the patients that were in ITU (pp 8 lines 15,16) re. acinobacter infections, and, open? or closed? myelomeningocele (pp 5 line 22)

pp 9 lines 17,18 - it is not clear what is meant and need to state if need for removal what the indications would be and if removed relative risks of leaving vs. removal

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

pp 4 line 17 suggest ...a subspecialty.... cf. extraexpertise

line 18 insert 'were' after insertion

pp 5 line 5 'were' cf was

line 12 need to define details of Medtronic

line 17 'in' cf. at and sp. Table

pp9 line 14? sp.
Table 1 line 9 'Other' cf. Others

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 limited interest

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

Nil