Reviewer's report

Title: Mediterranean spotted fever: clinical and laboratory characteristics of 415 Sicilian children and evaluation of different therapeutic strategies.

Version: 1 Date: 26 September 2005

Reviewer: Didier Raoult

Reviewer's report:

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

This article is interesting in reporting a very large series of cases. It may be more relevant by including more information on the prevalence of Rickettsia and Rickettsial diseases in Southern Europe and the relevant reference in the introduction. In Sicily 2 subspecies of R. conorii are found R. conorii conorii and R. conorii israeli (published in BMC Microbiology, 2005). R. slovaca and R. mongolotimonae are causing diseases in France, Spain, Portugal and Greece. R. helvetica and R. massiliae are found in various European countries including Italy. R. felis a flea borne disease is prevalent in all Europe. In the discussion as other rickettsiae can cause disease and cross-reactions. The authors should mention that in the present study they may have other rickettsioses not differentiated by this serological test. The occurrence of severe forms is not restricted to debilitated and old people, recent references in France, Spain and recently Portugal show that the current fatality rate of MSF is above that of RMSF! This should be mentioned with the appropriate references.
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