Reviewer's report

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

Version: 1 Date: 12 December 2005

Reviewer: amel letaief

Reviewer's report:

• The authors wrote about an interesting infectious disease subject in the Mediterranean area. Their objectives were well defined and have a large case series of children with MSF evaluated.
• Methods were appropriate and data sound and well controlled adhering the relevant standards for reporting. The writing was acceptable title should be shortened and term of "evaluation" is to remove since the study is not an adequate evaluation of therapy.

Comments :

Minor essential revisions:

Abstract: conclusions: add h to read: hepato-splenomegaly (same in discussion).
In the last line it's preferable to write under eight years.
It's interesting to put in results:
- The frequency of the three symptoms together (fever, rash and tache noire);
- the most important results of comparison of different therapies

Background:
- dogtick? dog tick
- tickbite? tick bite

Patients and methods:
- line 8: Marcy l'Etoille? l'Etoile

Results:
- Second paragraph: vesicular? vesicular
- Since IFA is a sensitive test even with cross reactions to other rickettsioses, it's necessary to explain how the nine patients, with negative double serology, were confirmed or to remove them
- At the end of results p value of comparison between hospitalization should be adapted to table 4

Discussion:
- 3rd paragraph: several randomized clinical trials…. To compare macrolides: these trials compared macrolides to cyclones and confirmed their efficacy
- side effects of clarithromycin and especially relapse with azithromycin should be more discussed and conclusion should emphasize the importance of macrolides under 8 years old.

Table 1: Since it’s referenced, it’s not necessary to add this table of Raoult’s score unless you put your data with frequency of each group of criteria

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
Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests'