Reviewer’s report

Title: Aetiology of community-acquired, acute gastroenteritis in hospitalised adults: a prospective cohort study

Version: 1 Date: 5 August 2008

Reviewer: Martha Sinclair

Reviewer’s report:

This is an excellent, well written paper with significant new findings in two areas - underdiagnosis of Campylobacter infections by culture-based methods and the association between disease severity and co-existing medical conditions.

Major compulsory revisions
None required.

Minor essential revisions
1) Page 4 Background 2nd sentence. This statement about the relative risk of death in young and old applies to developed countries only - in developing countries deaths are much more common in children. Suggest adding “In developed nations …” to the start of the sentence so that it reads “In developed nations, peak incidences of infectious gastroenteritis are found in younger age groups (< 5 years), while severe disease leading to hospitalisation and resulting in death is most frequently observed in elderly patients (> 60 years).”

2) Page 11 section on “Unknown disease aetiology”. 3rd sentence refers to Figure 1 as showing no seasonal pattern - but Figure 1 does not show any seasonal information - delete reference to Figure 1.

3) Table 1 Definition of CCI should be on a new line separate from footnote ‘c’. In fact it would be better to move CCI definition up to the top of the footnotes and label it as footnote ‘a’ with remaining footnotes and labels in Table changed accordingly.

Discretionary revisions
None.

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
'I declare that I have no competing interests'