Reviewer's report

Title: Incidence of human cystic echinococcosis in Slovenia

Version: 1 Date: 5 November 2007

Reviewer: Thomas TR Romig

Reviewer's report:

General

This is an interesting paper, giving some data on the frequency of cystic echinococcosis in Slovenia. As very little has been published on CE in the region of former Yugoslavia, it is certainly worth to be published after some revision.

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

1) Do all 34 patients show imaging signs compatible with CE? This is not clear from the manuscript, as both in the abstract and in the results section the wording ‘and/or’ is used linking positive imaging with other symptoms (jaundice, pain...). The latter are not diagnostic, so it should be stated that all have positive imaging, and other cases – if there are - have to be excluded.

2) Why were the sera with patterns P4 and P5 not studied further? It is perfectly possible that alveolar echinococcosis occurs in Slovenia, so the imaging results of these patients would be most interesting. If this will be dealt with elsewhere, it should be mentioned.

3) It is a bit confusing to discriminate between detected incidence and annual incidence. I suggest to use the term prevalence for the five-year period and retain the term annual incidence.

4) The Echinococcus associated with pigs is most often, but not always, the pig strain G7 (or E. canadensis), a parasite very different from the typical sheep-transmitted E. granulosus (G1). It should be mentioned in the discussion that the detected cases cannot be allocated to either of these forms by the serological methods used. Genetic characterizations of surgical samples are essential to diagnose these parasites, as no reliable data on the relative impact of these forms on human health exist. A short review on this is contained in Romig et al., (2006) The present situation of echinococcosis in Europe. Parasitology International 55, S187-S191.

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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)
1) As E. granulosus has been split into several species, it is safe to talk about the 'E. granulosus complex' if no further characterization has been made.

2) In the discussion it is not clear if the previous prevalence of 4.8 is based on the total population of Slovenia, or only on that from north and east.

3) Abstract: Eggs do not nest in the liver etc. Metacestodes (or larvae) do.

4) Background: this section should also contain the background data on CE in Slovenia (as presented in the discussion), and possible the situation in neighbouring countries, as far as known.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

There is quite a number of typing errors, and the language should be checked again.

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 importance in its field

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

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

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare I have no competing interests.