Reviewer's report

Title: Invasive Haemophilus influenzae infections in Germany: impact of non-type b serotypes in the post-vaccine era

Version: 1 Date: 16 January 2009

Reviewer: David W Scheifele

Reviewer's report:

This report describes the trend in H. influenzae invasive disease affecting children <10 years of age in Germany, for the period 1998-2005. This is a period during which Hib vaccines were widely used, minimizing the frequency of Hib cases. More case details were obtained from 2001 onwards. The question of interest was whether invasive disease caused by non-b strains increased in frequency. Few other studies have addressed this question. The observations are reasonably robust given the population size and isolate numbers involved.

Specific comments for minor revisions:

1. The surveillance systems have been described in earlier publications but the response rates within the two systems should be stated, along with the proportion of reported cases detected by each system. If the surveillance varied in completeness, the consequences for case totals over time need to be addressed (one wonders about the 1999 figures, for instance).

2. Figure 1 shows that a greater proportion of isolates were typed in the latter years of the survey but the text does not indicate what proportion of the typing was done at the central reference center versus the (less consistent) local laboratories.

3. A few words puzzled this reviewer, particularly “anamnestic information” (page 6) which I took to mean medical history.

4. Biotype data are mentioned in Methods and Discussion but not in Results, apart from Table 1.

5. The discussion asserts that surveillance system response rates were high but these data are so central to interpreting the results that they should be included in the Results, as mentioned above.

6. Figure 1: the case numbers in 1999 seem anomalous overall and for Hib. This would seem to merit a comment, particularly if system variation occurred.

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 that I have no competing interests.