Reviewer's report

Title: Recurrent Merkel Cell carcinoma on Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia: differential diagnosis of regional lymphadenopathy and treatment

Version: 2 Date: 22 June 2005

Reviewer: Paul Ziprin

Reviewer's report:

General
The authors present a case report of a patient presenting with recurrent Merkel Cell Carcinoma (MCC) with a background history of CLL and the subsequent finding of dual pathology with regards to coexisting lymphadenopathy due to small lymphocytic lymphoma.

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

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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)

Some minor points: there are a number of grammatical errors eg lines 18 and 20, page 5; line 11, page 7.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

The authors correctly point out that it is important to correctly identify the cause of the lymphadenopathy in these cases of CLL associated MCC as treatment strategies will differ. However as the subsequent lymph node recurrence of the MCC occurred only one month following the diagnosis of the small lymphocytic lymphoma, it raises the possibility that it was already present when the excision biopsy was performed and the biopsy result was falsely reassuring. Lymph node metastases has to be strongly suspected as 12-45% have lymph node disease at presentation and upto 79% will develop lymph node disease during the course of the disease (Ziprin et al Br J Derm 2000). Lymph node mapping or elective lymph node dissection at presentation may have helped. The authors elude to this on page 9 in the discussion. Therefore the message should be to manage the lymph node disease associated with MCC aggressively and not rely on it being related to CLL.

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests