Reviewer's report

Title: Incidence of leukemias in children from El Salvador and Mexico City between 1996 and 2000: Hospital prospective survey.

Version: 1 Date: 22 December 2004

Reviewer: Charles A Stiller

Reviewer's report:

General
This study presents incidence data for childhood leukaemia in El Salvador for the first time, together with the first credible, population-based data for Mexico. It fills some important gaps in knowledge of the incidence of childhood cancer in the Americas.

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

Methods: Hospitals. Final sentence needs clarification. Does it mean that only children of Mexican nationality who were ordinarily resident within Mexico City were included? Was it possible to check that residents of other parts of the country who had another family member residing within the city were excluded?

Methods: Populations. The recorded population of children in Mexico City appears to fluctuate wildly from year to year; what is the explanation for this?

Methods: Analysis. As data were only available for age 0-11 in El Salvador, it is not possible to calculate the AAIR accurately for age 0-14. Therefore, all mention of AAIR for El Salvador should be removed. (this also applies to Results and Discussion.)

Discussion. The age-specific incidence rates in both countries, as well as the AAIR in Mexico, should be compared with those for other populations, in particular those reported in references 4, 9, 10, 11, 27 and 28, and for Hispanic children in California (Glazer et al., 1999) and Florida (Wilkinson et al., 2001).

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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)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

Were immunophenotypes known for a substantial proportion of cases of ALL? If so, it would be interesting for them to be presented and discussed.

The relative frequency of AML M3 could be discussed also in relation to other series of Latin American or Hispanic origin.

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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