Reviewer’s report

Title: Varicella-zoster virus infections in immunocompromised patients - a single centre 6-years analysis

Version: 2 Date: 31 January 2011

Reviewer: Andreas Sauerbrei

Reviewer’s report:

General comments:
This study analyzes VZV diseases in pediatric patients of a medical center in Germany and compares the findings with published data. Hence, the present manuscript provides a good overview of the incidence, clinical course, complications and treatment of VZV infections in oncologic and immunocompromised patients. Furthermore, three interesting case reports are presented. The manuscript can be recommended for publication. However, I have several remarks, which should be considered to revise the manuscript.

Detailed evaluation:

Minor essential revisions
1. The manuscript could benefit from better wording in several sentences; e.g. page 2, line 4: “VZV vaccines” (varicella vaccine or zoster vaccine?); page 3, line 12: “mortality rate of VZV” (the authors mean VZV infection); page 6, patient 9, line 12: “atypical VZV” (the authors mean atypical varicella); page 7, line 5: “anti-varicella antibodies” (the authors mean anti-VZV antibodies).
In addition, “VZV infection” should be specified using the terms “varicella” or “zoster” describing the clinical picture if possible. For example, patient 9 developed varicella.

Page 6, lines 8-10: This sentence is confusing.

Tab. 1: What does “DOD=dead of disease” mean?

2. Page 5, lines 12-14: Since determination of VZV-specific antibodies can reveal negative findings in the early state of VZV infections, especially in immunocompromised patients, the day after onset of the disease should be added.

3. Page 7, patient 10, lines 13-16: Why did the authors decide to give cidofovir as alternative to acyclovir? In case of clinical resistance of acyclovir against VZV, foscarnet is recommended as alternative antiviral drug. By contrast, cidofovir is officially not approved for the treatment of VZV infections.

4. Fig. 1: The illustrations should be arranged as described in the text.

5. The manuscript has to be carefully checked for spelling mistakes.

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.