Reviewer's report

Title: Severe vitamin B12 deficiency in a totally breastfed 5-month-old Italian infant born to a mother receiving multivitamin supplementation during pregnancy

Version: 1 Date: 30 April 2012

Reviewer: Sharon Unger

Reviewer's report:

This report is well written although I do have some suggestions to strengthen the report as itemized below.

Major Compulsory Revisions

Throughout the text there is a comment of “strict vegetarian” to describe the mother. This needs to be specified. Generally it is only vegan mothers who abstain from any animal products that are deficient in B12. Is that the case for this mother? Her diet should be defined and then labeled as vegan throughout the text if this is correct.

There is a comment in a few places of B12 supplementation being “mandatory”. I don’t think that this is the correct use of this word. Are you really going to force (ie supervise/monitor) mothers to ensure compliance for B12 supplementation? This would be very difficult to mandate. Rather I think that it is essential for physicians to be aware of the need for B12 supplementation for vegans and to properly counsel/ treat their patients in order to prevent this condition in the infant.

Minor Essential Revisions

Abstract: (line 4) define systematically. Was the B12 an oral supplement? Did she take it daily? Was she compliant with her supplementation routine?

Key words are missing.

Case report: were maternal B12 levels ever checked during pregnancy? Was the baby ever seen by a physician prior to 5 months of age and if so what were the findings? The parents reported that the baby had been symptomatic since 3 months?

Was thallasemia screening ever considered?

Conclusions: Consider starting the conclusions that this is so important to be aware of because of the increasing number of vegan mothers and that it is a preventable cause of neurodevelopmental delay. Should not discuss the first few months of life as this was not described in the case report.
Discretionary Revisions

Title: would recommend changing “totally” to “exclusively” to be consistent with common usage of the word.

Abstract: (line 3) again change “totally” to “exclusively”
(line 7) add head circumference as below 3%
(line 11) add normal values for your lab for B12 and folate
(line 14) change “retarded” to “delayed”
(line 17): no comma before “and”
(line 18) change “increased” to “improved”
(line 19) change “after” to “within”

Background: (line 7) change “infants” to “infancy”
Case report: (page 5, line 23) change “retarded” to “delayed”
(page 6, line 4) no comma before “and”
(page 6, line 7) change “increased” to “improved”

Conclusions: (page 8, line 7) change “condition” to “impact”
(page 8, line 21) delete “an” before hematological
(page 9, line 1) change “retardation” to “delay”
(page 9, line 5) change “so far” to “thus far”
(page 9, line 6) change “tend to” to “may” and clarify the length of time – can it be permanent?
(page 9, line 7) change “controlling” to “adequate”
(page 9, line 8) as mentioned, do not make “mandatory” treatments and specify “vegan”
(page 9, line 11) change “infants” to “infancy”; change “Our” to “This”

Authors’ contributions: Change to “SG, GC and FM were responsible for making the diagnosis, treating the infant in hospital and for the follow up.”

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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.