Reviewer's report

Title: X-linked Hyper IgM (HIGM1) in an African kindred: The first report from South Africa

Version: Date: 15 October 2003

Reviewer: John Ziegler

Reviewer's report:

General

This study has been well conducted, and describes a novel deletional mutation identified using an interest approach.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

In the third paragraph of Methods “phorbol” is misspelt.

Minor Compulsory Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

In the results section under “Nucleic acid analysis” the first line refers to material obtained from “from the affected boy.” Since the diagnosis of a CD40 ligand defect was made in two siblings, it isn’t clear which subject is “the affected boy.” A family tree diagram which identifies all the subjects referred to in the paper would be helpful.

In the first paragraph of Discussion the last sentence says “Unfortunately, this development only occurred after the eldest, affected boy had died” implying that the availability of molecular diagnosis of CD40 ligand defect would have altered the outcome for the first born affected sibling. This is claim is not born by the facts of the report and should be removed. Firstly, the X-linkage evident in the family history would not have been recognised until the second affected boy presented; secondly, once the diagnosis of IgG deficiency had been made, IVIG therapy became feasible and the possible occurrence of PCP (did this contribute to his death) could have been entertained in the event of an unresponsive pneumonia. Thirdly, “medical treatment did not prevent the demise of [all] the three children” so that the knowledge by the treating team of the exact diagnosis was shown not to lead to life-saving treatment.

There is no convincing argument presented to support the last statement of the paper, “existing laboratory infrastructure should be strengthened to enable more detailed analyses” and this should be deleted.

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

Nil

What next?: Accept after minor compulsory revisions

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

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests: None