Reviewer's report

Title: Association between congenital toxoplasmosis and parent-reported developmental outcomes, concerns, and impairments, in 3 year old children.

Version: 1 Date: 25 January 2005

Reviewer: Jeffrey L Jones

Reviewer's report:

General
See comments that apply to the discussion

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
None

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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)

Abstract
Background: suggest adding the word “treated”, i.e., “To determine the association between treated congenital toxoplasmosis and development, behaviour...”

Conclusions: Suggest adding the words “…at 3 years of age” to the end of the first sentence.

Methods

Study population: Were uninfected control children with other significant medical and neurological problems excluded? It seems that the goal should be to compare children treated for toxoplasmosis with normal uninfected control children.

Analysis

Page 7, last para: First sentence is cut off.

Page 8, first para: Were results similar if one standard deviation below the mean was used as a cutoff, rather than 10%.

Results

Page 10, para 1: Even though this has been reported elsewhere, a very brief presentation of how the responders compared with the non-responders for pertinent factors that were available would be helpful. It is possible that among the controls, the parents with children that had impairments were more likely to respond.

Discussion

Page 15, last para: The 17 terminations for toxoplasmosis is a real limitation of the study and should
be mentioned in the abstract if possible.

Conclusions:

Suggest adding “by 3 years of age” to the end of the second sentence.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

Methods

Page 7 para 1: Although this would involve more resources, a neuropsychiatric evaluation of the children in the study by a professional would be more sensitive for detecting impairments and fully accessing the participants.

Discussion

It seem that the major question that needs to be answered regarding congenital toxoplasmosis is whether screening, treatment, and medical followup are beneficial. The present study cannot answer this question because all of the children with congenital toxoplasmosis were treated (pre and/or post-natally). However, a well-designed clinical trial could answer the question about the benefit of screening and treatment. Perhaps the authors and their collaborators would discuss the need for such a trial.

Comment: A second question, what impairments occur over time in children with treated toxoplasmosis compared to (normal?) control children has been addressed in this manuscript for children up to 3 years of age. Because many developmental abnormalities become apparent later during school years if at all possible this study should be continued on through at least the early school years.

Page 15: Were any of the children acutely infected with T. gondii after birth? Although these data are probably not available, such acute infection could lead to ocular problems in a small percentage of the control children.

Page 16, second para: Any suggestions about how to reduce parental anxiety? Would telling the parents the approximate risk of vision impairment from congenital toxoplasmosis at various ages be helpful? Might some parental anxiety be a good thing (leading them to acquire better follow-up of their child)?

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.