Reviewer's report

Title: Procalcitonin is not sufficiently reliable to be the sole marker of neonatal sepsis of nosocomial origin

Version: 2 Date: 22 March 2006

Reviewer: Jean-Louis Vincent

Reviewer's report:

General
The authors show the value of procalcitonin as a sepsis marker in neonates but underline that it should not be the only element taken into account to identify nosocomial sepsis. The study has the advantage of being multicenter. Otherwise, similar data have been showed by other groups so that the information provided here is not very new.

Specific comments:
1. The authors should emphasize in the discussion section that this study has the advantage of being multicenter.
2. Discussion section middle of page 10, is this really a homogeneous group of neonates? Why?
3. End of the discussion section (second half of page 11): Anyhow; the SIRS criteria have not been very helpful so that clinicians rely on them less and less (see Levy et al. Crit Care Med 2003). This is precisely why sepsis markers may be helpful. This entire paragraph could be either deleted or reoriented to emphasize the limitations of the SIRS criteria.
4. Table 2 does not really present the etiology of sepsis (but simply sepsis caused by CONS versus other pathogens.)
5. Actually it would be nice to have more clinical and bacteriologic information concerning these 61 neonates.

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

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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)