Reviewer’s report

Title: Incidence of apnea and bradycardia following first diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis-inactivated polio-Haemophilus influenzae type B immunization in hospitalized preterm infants

Version: 1 Date: 10 November 2005

Reviewer: David Isaacs

Reviewer’s report:

General

This is an interesting article about an important topic, the safety of immunisation of preterm babies. It adds significantly to the literature, because it includes a control group, which shows that there may be a spontaneous increase in the frequency of apneas, such that an increase associated with a recent immunisation could be chance.

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

My only concern is that it is not clear what happened to the control group. I presume that they were observed for 72 hours, then there was nothing done (no placebo injection, no vaccine given) and then they were observed for a further 72 hours to see if there was a 25% or greater change in the frequency of apnea or bradycardia. The reason I think this needs spelling out like this is that the paper keeps referring (in the Abstract and in the Methods) to an increase in apneas post-immunization. Indeed the definition specifically says a 25% increase post-immunization compared to pre. I suggest that the authors refer to period 1 and period 2, and say that for immunized babies period 1=pre- and period 2=post-immunization, but for control babies it represents before and after a pre-defined time.

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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)

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests: