Reviewer's report

Title: Cough and reflux esophagitis in children: their co-existence and airway cellularity

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Reviewer: Jack A Kastelik

Reviewer's report:

1. This is a well written manuscript. The authors studied the frequency of cough in children in relation to symptoms of GER. In addition, the authors compared airway cellularity and microbiology of BAL in children with and without cough and RE. At present there is very little information on these areas. I feel, therefore that the data presented in this study is of relevance.

Minor comments:

The Introduction section may benefit from a short description of previous studies that examined BAL cellular content in patients with cough (eg Mcgarvey et al ERJ 1999;13:59-65) and GERD.

The authors hypothesised that airways neutrophilia will be more likely in children with cough. Are there any previous studies to support their hypothesis?

2. & 3 & 4. The Methods and Results sections are well written. Minor mistake in the Results section of the Abstract 3rd line (7,IQR 28) should read (7,IQR 4). The data describes an important relationship between cough and GERD in children. In fact, the authors found that in children without lung disease the co-existence of GERD and cough are common and independent of RE.

Minor comments: The authors reported the highest neutrophilia in children with cough without RE and suggested that the most likely explanation for airway neutrophilia is related to airway bacterial infection and not to RE. Can the authors suggest any other possible explanations for their findings? Is it possible that inflammation can contribute to this finding? Surprisingly, no airway eosinophilia was found on BAL. Can the authors comment on this finding?

5. & 6 & 7. The abstract and the title accurately convey the findings. The writing is acceptable. The Discussion and Conclusions sections are well written and discuss the findings including the possible limitations of the study.

Overall I feel that this study provides important data on the association between cough and GERD in children and describes the presence of airway neutrophilia in children with cough without RE. The most likely explanation for this finding was bacterial infection rather than RE.

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:
I declare that I have no competing interests