Reviewer’s report

Title: Children as index case of pertussis in the community

Version: 1 Date: 7 November 2006

Reviewer: Alberto E Tozzi

Reviewer’s report:

General
The results from this study call extensive investigation among households when a case of pertussis is diagnosed.

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

The authors state that index cases were recruited during a surveillance activity. It would be useful to describe which clinical symptoms are considered as suspected pertussis and who is considered eligible for microbiological examination. It would be also useful to give more details about the hospital setting in which the study was performed. How many patients are admitted in one year? Is the hospital serving a rural or metropolitan area? etc.

Were frequent contacts with relatives and neighbors precisely defined (i.e. number of hours together in a day)?

It seems from the text that suspected cases among households and contacts were defined as simple cough. Was a specific definition applied (i.e. a certain duration, paroxism, or other symptoms)?

More information should be given about the personal characteristics of backtraced cases. In particular the reader would be interested in understanding more precisely the dynamic of transmission in the household. From Table 1 it seems that a certain number of index cases are defined as secondary cases. Which definitions are used for defining primary, co-primary, and secondary cases? Is it possible to give more information on who was identified as the source of infection? What about age group and other characteristics of cases found with the investigation? How many parents and how many adolescents were discovered by the investigation? A flow chart would also help.

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

Minor language imprecisions should be corrected.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
No competing interests.