Reviewer's report

Title: Serum interleukin-5 levels are elevated in mild and moderate persistent asthma irrespective of regular inhaled glucocorticoid therapy.

Version: 1 Date: 12 December 2003

Reviewer: Michael D Shields

Reviewer's report:

General
This study looks at the serum levels of iL-5 in atopic and non-atopic stable asthmatics but with mild/moderate persistent symptoms and with about one half being on inhaled corticosteroids (ICS). The authors report that serum iL-5 levels are elevated in asthmatics whether on ICS or not.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
1] 31 patients had not received ICS within the last 2 weeks. It is not known the time course for iL-5 to rise after stopping ICS (if ICS had already suppressed the iL-5). It would therefore be helpful to know the proportion that were truly steroid naive and how many had just recently stopped ICS. The authors should make it clearer when ICS were last used in this group.
2] FOR CONSIDERATION. There were 3 groups in each statistical comparision (eg controls, asthma NO ICS, asthma ICS) and as multiple pair-wise comparisions were used (Mann-Whitney U) it might be best to have a correction made (eg bonferoni)so that the cut off p-value for significance remains at 0.05

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

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
None - I have received payments for lectures from Pharmaceutical Companies (Glaxo, AstraZeneca, 3M, Merck Sharp & Dohme who have asthma treatment products but I do not think they are relevant to this publication.