Reviewer's report

Title: Quantifying Serum Antibody in Bird Fanciers' Hypersensitivity Pneumonitis.

Version: 1 Date: 28 February 2006

Reviewer: Yasuyuki Yoshizawa

Reviewer's report:

General

This study was undertaken to validate a quantitative fluorimetric assay for antibodies to serum from bird fanciers. The major finding is that IgG antibody against pigeon serum antigens, quantified by fluorimetry, provides a good discriminator of disease from asymptomatic breeders. Therefore, the authors believe that an automated fluorimetric assay provide a sensitive and specific method for the international standardization of HP serology. However the reader would wonder whether the categorization of the subjects under study is valid based upon only the questionnaire. This study was properly designed and the major finding is worthwhile to be published in BioMed Central.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
None

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
In the text at page 9, Figure 4 should be labeled as Figure 3.

As the authors mentioned, chronic insidious HP patients seldom complain of acute symptoms including fever and their positive rate of specific antibody against avian antigen by conventional EIA are relatively low. Insidious type HP cases might be included in ?unlikely? HP group. This possibility should be discussed.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
1. In the paper, 50 pigeon fanciers are categorized into three groups (probable HP, possible HP, and unlikely HP) based on their symptoms using questionnaire. I highly recommende that these patients be categorized as HP, symptomatic breeder without HP, and asymptomatic breeder after further clinical evaluations including physical findings, pulmonary function tests, and image findings. The resultant information will disclose the true sensitivity and specificity of this method (automated fluorimetry) in the diagnosis of HP and also show seropositive rates in symptomatic without HP and asymptomatic pigeon breeders.
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:
I declare that I have no competing interests.