Reviewer’s report

Title: The burden of co-existing dermatological disorders and their tendency of being overlooked among admitted patients

Version: 1 Date: 28 December 2010

Reviewer: Ignacio Garcia-Doval

Reviewer’s report:

This paper is a cross-sectional description of dermatological disorders in patients admitted to medical wards in a tertiary hospital in Tanzania.

The method used is adequate to describe prevalence, and the results are probably reliable as a description of a tertiary hospital in that area.

Major compulsory revisions:

1.-Some data in the paper suggest that there might be minor problems of patient selection in their sample. For example cellulitis is a frequent cause of admission in the developed world, representing only 1.5% of patients in the study sample: is this due to cellulitis patients being admitted to surgical wards, not being admitted or being infrequent? . Whether their findings are representative of their setting should be discussed (in the discussion).

Discretionary revisions:

2.-Overall my most important concern is about the relevance of the study question. Dermatological disorders are very prevalent in the general population and should be expected to be prevalent in hospitalized patients. The study confirms this known fact, and describes co-existence of systemic and dermatological disorders. But this co-existence should be analyzed in the context of well-known relationships. The paper states that doctors frequently overlook co-existing dermatological disorders (discussion, last paragraph), but one important cause for this is that many dermatological diagnosis are not related to the main diagnosis (the one that led to admission) and would not modify patient management (i.e, dermatological diagnosis might not be relevant findings). I suggest that the main study question should be changed to describing the prevalence of relevant dermatological diagnosis (those related to the diagnosis that led to admission, and those that might lead to a change in management of the main problem of the patient), and the percentage of those relevant findings that were overlooked.

Minor essential revisions:

3.-I suggest that the setting (“…in Tanzania”) should be added to the title, as the findings are highly dependent on the setting.

4.-In results, 4th paragraph (Table 4…): It is not clear what do percentages refer
to: “82% had co-existing dermatological disorders which were distributed as
follows: ….meningitis.. pneumonia”. These are not dermatological disorders. I
suggest that the phrase should be reviewed to improve clarity.

5.- Table 1: Column labeling is incomplete (in the second column there should be
an indication that the numbers in parenthesis are percentages)

I hope that you find my comments useful.

Best wishes,

Ignacio Garcia-Doval

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a
statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests