Reviewer's report

Title: Tracheal ring fracture and early tracheomalacia following percutaneous dilatational tracheostomy

Version: 1 Date: 20 May 2005

Reviewer: christoph profter

Reviewer's report:

General
This case report describes two complications following combined open and percutaneous dilatational tracheostomy (PDT). In difficult anatomic situations (voluminous and/or short neck, deep trachea etc.) this is a good approach to make tracheostomy as safe as possible. Choosing this method the dissection should be performed down to the level of the trachea to achieve the best possible control of bleeding and tracheal injury. Using a video-brochoscope the surgeon has direct visual control what is going on within the trachea during the procedure. Generally most complications following PDT are due to technical difficulties or failures. The dilatation must be sufficient to allow gentle placement of the tracheal tube. It is well known that difficulties in tube placements carry the danger of multiple tracheal ring fractures and therefore the danger of tracheomalacia.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
Why was the dissection stopped at the level of the strep muscles?
Obviously no video bronchoscope was used, why?
The authors should describe if there were any technical problems in dilatating and/or introducing the tracheal tube. This may be an explanation for the complications!

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
Writing errors: page 1, line 3 from bottom: airway references, ref. 2: stenosis

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
The discussion should include possible technical improvements as video bronchoscopy, sufficient preparation and dilatation of the trachea etc.

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