Reviewer's report

Title: Obliteration of radical cavities with autogenous cortical bone; long-term results

Version: 1 Date: 15 April 2008

Reviewer: John L Dornhoffer

Reviewer's report:

Minor essential revisions

The authors should be complimented in reporting results of mastoid obliteration using several useful techniques that are seldom utilized in one manuscript, that is mastoid volume after obliteration, hearing results, and the questionnaire related to cavity related problems. It would have been very nice to see mastoid volumes before immediately after and long-term, but I recognize that this is a retrospective review with its inherent weaknesses, and believe it can contribute to the current literature concerning this type of surgical intervention. There are some problems that must be addressed prior to publishing, however.

First of all, as this is a surgical outcomes report, a little more detail concerning the surgical technique is warranted in the material and methods section. References were mentioned in the introduction that where in 1972 and 1989 respectively, and some detail in the discussion, but the reader will be interested in where the chips are place and how they utilized with the bone pate. How large are the chips? Are they place more in the sinodural angle with pate more near the TM? Also how is the Palve flap kept in place? Is packing used? Only a short addition is necessary, but it needs to be added.

Secondly, 133 patients were operated on, 94 agreed to participate, but 70 actually did. This represents only about one half of the patients, and one has to wonder about selection bias with those that didn’t participate. Are the good results more likely to participate? This is a problem with every retrospective long-term study, and is largely unavoidable, but the fact has to be mentioned in the interpretation of the results.

I think the actual questionnaire should be included as a figure so we can see what questions are asked and how they are scored.

In the results the patient population is confusing. It says 20 patients were previously operated, but in the table the number comes out at 27. Part B of table 1 says 22 patients had revision after mastoid obliteration, but in the text, it says 21.

The last paragraph of the discussion is a little confusing. The last sentence should perhaps read, “An attempt was made to perform the CWD with obliteration as a single stage surgery, but revisions were required in 22 patients
with 6 exhibiting recurrent cholesteatoma. Also in this paragraph, it says “six revisions radical operations (8%)…., it is 9% in the table.

With these changes, the manuscript can be considered acceptable for publication.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

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

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I have no competing interests