Reviewer's report

Title: Combined Sterno-Clavicular Approach As An Alternative Technique In Hybrid Exclusion Of Aortic Arch Aneurysm

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Reviewer: Emmanouil Kapetanakis

Reviewer's report:

It was with great interest that I read the manuscript by Dr. Protopapas and colleagues and would like to thank the editor of the journal for selecting me as a reviewer of this work.

In this manuscript, Protopapas et al, present an alternative approach of gaining access for a staged hybrid exclusion repair in aortic arch aneurysms. Their innovation is to perform a staged repair were in addition to the median sternotomy a left subclavicular incision and a tunnel is performed through which a bifurcated graft is anastomosed to the left subclavian artery without the use of cardiopulmonary bypass and of circulatory arrest.

The technique is innovative and intriguing with significant potential. If properly applied it could reduce the use of circulatory arrest and global cerebral ischemia time and thus decrease associated morbidity (in the form of cerebrovascular injury, loss of function, etc). As such the message is important enough to warrant presentation to the general cardiothoracic community. The manuscript is succinct, short and concise. The photographs and images are illustrative and informative.

However, there are still areas, which warrant improvement. Specifically I suggest the following discretionary revisions:

1. The authors should avoid using abbreviations in the abstract, as it is confusing for the readers to have to refer to it for term clarification. Given that the abstract is only 110 words in length (350 max allowed) there is plenty of space available.

2. The description of the surgical technique reads indexed and monotonous. The authors should try to develop a more fluid description of the procedure instead of the step-by-step method used.

3. The conclusion also reads indexed and rigid and is underdeveloped. A reconfiguration of the main points in a more fluid arrangement i.e. “Previously described advantages of this hybrid technique consist of avoiding or reducing global cerebral ischemia time, the need for cerebral perfusion or of cerebroplegia and in limiting the number of aorto-graft anastomosis to one proximal and two distal ones [2]” would probably read better.

4. In page four, fourth paragraph the sentence “Subsequently, whilst flow if the IA
“resumes…” should probably read “Subsequently, whilst flow in the IA resumes…”

In conclusion, this is an interesting and informative "how to do it" paper describing a potentially useful technique to the surgical community. Slight editorial corrections in expression and prose would enhance it even further.

**What next?:** Accept after discretionary revisions

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

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