Reviewer's report

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

Version: 1 Date: 16 July 2007

Reviewer: pankaj kumar

Reviewer's report:

General
An interesting approach in an ever increasing attempt to reduce the morbidity and mortality of aortic arch surgery. The authors are to be commended on reporting their approach. However I have the following comments.

The established gold standard for arch aneurysm at present in my view would be surgical repair with warm surgery with cerebral perfusion. It is against this gold standard that the authors report needs to be compared against.

1. Their approach is another variant on the hybrid approach of off pump technique for arch exclusion. There are concerns regarding endoleaks and long term stability of endovasular stent exclusion of the aortic arch. This is further compounded by the dangers of application of side biting clamps on the innominate artery and the translocation of left carotid artery in the setting if diseased arch vessels. I think these dangers need to be mentioned in the comments section. Indications for this approach clearly needs to be clarified as by their own admission clearly in a marfanoid patient this approach is neither necessary nor desired.

2. I note the technique has been employed in three cases. I think a brief note detailing the outcome of these patients is required.

3. There are several groups undertaking warm arch surgery with cerebral perfusion and reporting excellent results. Clearly the reported approach will need to fare well with this established practice or do the authors propose this approach for the cases considered high risk for the best of the conventional approach (warm arch surgery with cerebral perfusion)

I would recommend publication of the manuscript with the above issues being addressed.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of
a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

**What next?:** Accept after minor essential 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.