Reviewer's report

Title: Acute opioid intoxication in an infant chronically exposed to cocaine and heroin

Version: 2 Date: 7 October 2010

Reviewer: Carmen Jurado

Which of the following best describes what type of case report this is?: Other

If other, please specify:

The utility of hair analysis in verifying chronic exposure to drugs of abuse

Has the case been reported coherently?: Yes

Is the case report authentic?: Yes

Is the case report ethical?: Yes

Is there any missing information that you think must be added before publication?: No

Is this case worth reporting?: Yes

Is the case report persuasive?: Yes

Does the case report have explanatory value?: Yes

Does the case report have diagnostic value?: Yes

Will the case report make a difference to clinical practice?: No

Is the anonymity of the patient protected?: Yes

Comments to authors:

In this paper, the authors demonstrate the utility of hair analysis in verifying a chronic exposure to heroin and cocaine in both a 1-month-old infant and in the parents, as well.

The exposure to drugs of abuse in children living in a highly risk-filled environment is a major problem in our society. For this reason, all the attempts to demonstrate this exposure in order to avoid it are welcome. In this sense, hair is the matrix of choice to demonstrate chronic or long term exposure to drugs,
because of the time window of detection, which ranges from months to years, depending on the length of the hair.

In my opinion, the manuscript is adequate to for publication in the Journal of Medical Care Reports (JMCR), after performing adequate changes.

General Comments
• The authors speak indistinctly about “acute poisoning” and “acute intoxication”. Homogeneity is required and I, personally, prefer “acute intoxication”.
• When speaking about “drugs of abuse”, the authors sometimes refer to “drugs” and other times to “drugs of abuse”. If we considerer that the term “drugs” is applicable to medical drugs, they must make precise in all cases that they are referring to “drugs of abuse”.

Specific Comments
• Title: the manuscript is entitled “Acute opioid intoxication in an infant ……..”, taking into consideration the results of urinalysis, which show a ratio morphine/codeine in agreement with a heroin intoxication, the title would be better as “Acute heroin intoxication ……..”.
• Introduction: the authors refer to the advantage of hair for allowing a relatively long retrospective identification of substances. Nevertheless, a new paragraph explaining the long window of detection (from months to years) and the admitted growth rate (1cm/month according to the Society of Hair Testing) would be welcomed.
• Introduction: in the last paragraph it is not clear if, when speaking about the “rationale for this approach”, the authors are referring to the previous paragraph (Ref, 4,5) or to the aim of this manuscript. If they are referring to Ref. 4 and 5, a new paragraph with the objectives of this paper is required.
• Case report (page 3): the drugs of abuse tested in the screening by CEDIA must be specified.
• Case report (page 4): they only refer to unbleached maternal hair, but there is nothing about other types of cosmetic treatments.
• Discussion (page 4): Since, hair analysis demonstrated chronic exposure to heroin, specifically, in place of opioids, in general, the paragraph “….. in an infant chronically exposed to opioids and cocaine” should be changed to “….. in an infant chronically exposed to heroin and cocaine”
• Table 1: an additional column with the lengths of the hair samples from the father and the infant should be included. What do the two paragraphs included after the table (0-3 cm from the scalp and 0-12 cm from the scalp) mean?

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

Declaration of competing interests:
'I declare that I have no competing interests'