Reviewer’s report

Title: Different biomarkers values in hair after chronic crack exposure in adults and children: a case report

Version: 4 Date: 17 August 2011

Reviewer: Simona Pichini

Which of the following best describes what type of case report this is?: An unexpected event in the course of observing or treating a patient

If other, please specify:

This case enlightens an emerging problem in European countries which is the pediatric exposure to drugs of abuse consumed by parents. An alarm should be raised concerning children from risky environments, where many clinical (medical and psychodevelopmental) should be linked to this exposure

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?: Yes

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?: Yes

Is the anonymity of the patient protected?: Yes

Comments to authors:

THIS TITLE OF THIS SUBMISSION HAS TO BE CHANGED. The focus of this case report is the chronic exposure evidenced in a toddler. Thus, title should be changed in “Values of hair biomarkers following chronic exposure to drugs of abuse in adults and their toddler: a case report” A major
The drawback of the submission is that the use of crack cocaine cannot be postulated because, as reported by international literature, anhydroecgonine methylester in hair samples is the unique biomarker of crack smoke. The authors did not identify this metabolite, nor any other but benzoylecgonine (check the spelling along the submission and the abbreviation that has to be BZG and not BZE) by immunoassay, with no chromatographic confirmation of immunoassay results. Thus the only important discussion that has to be made is that parental consumption of drugs of abuse can be reflected in a non negligible exposure in their progeny. This is more crucial when we talk about a toddler, who spends most of his/her time with the parents.

Some comparison with what has been reported in the international literature and values found by other investigators is essential to discuss the present case.

Specific Comments:

INTRODUCTION. Delete the half. It is not important to mention the significance of hair analysis, which is well known. Instead the problem of pediatric exposure to parental drugs, especially the smoked ones should be reminded with examples from international literature.

RESULTS: Among the results the clinical situation of the toddler should be reported together with the toxicological analysis. Authors should explain why the only use immunoassay (they are indeed a pediatric emergency ward and speed of results is of paramount importance).

DISCUSSION AN CONCLUSION

The discussion should focus on the presented case. Forget about crack and mention cocaine and other drugs use, explain the clinical consequences of a poly exposure (cannabis exposure was also reported) and conclude advocating the hair analysis in all cases of newborns, toddlers and children from risky environments

English editing is required.

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

Declaration of competing interests:

NO COMPETING INTERESTS