Reviewer's report

Title: Bacteriological methods as add on tests to FNA cytology in diagnosis of tuberculous lymphadenitis: Can they reduce the diagnostic dilemma?

Version: 3  Date: 25 June 2014

Reviewer: colleen wright

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Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The diagnostic dilemma of tuberculosis in Africa, Ethiopia included, as stated in this article, remains a real problem for clinicians and pathologists. While this article might present a very simplistic and overworked problem to an environment where the prevalence is not so high and the facilities and funds to diagnose it better equipped, in many countries even culture is beyond reach. Therefore the ability to diagnose TB on FNAC becomes paramount.

2. The major problem I foresee with this article is the assumption that TB (or mycobacterial disease) can be diagnosed on cytomorphology alone. TB has many mimics and in this era of HIV an even more diverse presentation on cytology and therefore to make a diagnosis – positive or negative without including a stain such as ZN or Kinyoun is not advisable. The diagnosis of mycobacterial disease (NOT TB) on cytology should always include identification of the organism. This is relatively inexpensive and simple and within the ability of most laboratories expertise. This should be emphasised in the article and the figures recalculated. The specificity of cytology will increase markedly although the sensitivity will drop. It ensures that patients are treated appropriately.

False/True negative ZN/Kinyoun stains with pos cytomorphology are seen in patients with
Low bacillary load
On TB treatment
Poor stain technique/screening

3. The references are incomplete/incorrect, particularly 1,2,4,5 and 9

Minor Essential Revisions

The language /grammar needs attention. As this is a PDF document I could not do the corrections in track. They are too many/too significant for current publication

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
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 declare that I have no competing interests'