Author's response to reviews

Title: Erysipelas, a large retrospective study of aetiology and clinical presentation

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editor,

Thank you for the constructive criticism brought forward by referee 1 on our manuscript entitled “Erysipelas, a large retrospective study of aetiology and clinical presentation” (MS: 1626806131551636). We feel that the revised version of our manuscript is improved and hope that you will now find it appropriate for publication. The detailed response to the comments by the reviewers is found below. Changes in the manuscript are marked with the track changes function.

Hoping for a positive response I remain,
Yours sincerely

Magnus Rasmussen
MD, PhD

Reviewer 1

Reviewer comment: Major Compulsory Revisions: None
Author reply: OK

Reviewer comment: Minor Essential Revisions:
Text line 156: ‘For definite treatment, ‘ Not sure what this means - ‘definitive – that is culture directed treatment or later treatment when the diagnosis was clearer?’
Author reply: To clarify this relevant comment we have added a sentence on line 164 stating “defined as the antibiotic prescribed when the patient left the hospital”.

Reviewer comment: Discretionary Revisions
Erysipelas v Cellulitis
The authors have chosen to separate erysipelas from cellulitis and this clarity of distinction is not obvious to all. Hirschmann points out that erysipelas has been used in three confusing and different ways. The reader is therefore left with the uncertainty that another set of patients with the diagnosis of cellulitis also exists within the University Hospital Lund whose clinical features and microbiology are different from those patients presented. If this is not the case then the title should read ‘Erysipelas and Cellulitis, a large …’. If it is the case then we would also be interested in the cases of cellulitis and their clinical and microbiology features and how they differ from erysipelas.
Author reply: This is a very relevant comment and to clarify this we have added a statement in the introduction: “Some clinicians use the term erysipelas only for facial cutaneous infections whereas yet others use the term erysipelas also to describe cellulitis” (lines 28-30) and a reference to the work of Hirschmann is given. In the methods section we have added a statement that also the cases diagnosed as cellulitis (L03) were retrieved from the database (line 67). In the results section (lines 100-103) we have added a statement “During the same time period 188 episodes of cellulitis were recorded. The diagnosis of “cellulitis” is in our Department used to describe a deeper type of infection and these cases were not further studied.”. We agree with the reviewer that these 188 cases could also be studied but the aim of the present work is not to investigate the difference between these two types of infections which certainly have overlapping features.

Reviewer comment: Text line 31: suggested change
‘Despite erysipelas being common, and ...’
Author reply: We have changed the text according to the suggestion.

Reviewer comment: Text line 69: suggested change
‘The Ethics Committee ...’
Author reply: We have changed the text according to the suggestion.

Reviewer comment: Wound cultures:
Data on antibiotics prior to cultures would be helpful in the case of negative and gram-negative cultures.
Author reply: We agree, but the timing of culture and the initiation of therapy cannot be reliably extracted from the medical records so we find this not possible to perform. This is of course a limitation of this retrospective study which we acknowledge at lines 184-186.

Reviewer comment: Isoxazolylpenicillins: suggested change
Probably better to state which was used e.g. cloxacillin, flucloxacillin, rather than the group name.
Author reply: we have changed the text to “cloxacillin or flucloxacillin” (lines 161-162)

Reviewer comment: Text lines 180-182: suggested change
‘, though our hospital is the only one serving the population (or area).’
Author reply: We have changed the text according to the suggestion.

Reviewer comment: Text line 204: comment
Komatsu et al published on the differences between GAS and GGS cellulitis and found a difference in a history of previous episodes. You may find this paper helpful to refer to.
Author reply: This reference is indeed relevant but it was not out when we submitted our manuscript last year. We now quote that reference in the discussion and have added a sentence “Indeed, an increase tendency for recurrence in GGS cellulitis as compared to GAS cellulitis was very recently demonstrated”.

Reviewer 2

Reviewer comment: Major Compulsory Revisions: None
Author reply: OK