Reviewer's report

Title: High Prevalence of Community-Acquired Bacteraemia in Non-febrile Children in Guinea-Bissau: An Observational Study

Version: 2 Date: 18 September 2014

Reviewer: James Berkley

Reviewer's report:

The study is interesting and of obvious importance. The results themselves are straightforward, but some more interpretation is needed.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The title appears misleading since fever was one of the inclusion criteria.

2. The main question mark over this study relates to the high contamination rates and this requires much more discussion. The overall rate of bacteraemia is relatively high. However, the prevalence of contaminants suggests that isolation of 'pathogens' might also have been due to contamination, especially Staphylococcus aureus (as mentioned), but potentially other organisms too. This is also suggested by the similar prevalence in hospitalised and outpatient children, and the lack of predictive value of the clinical features.

The contamination rate should be compared to other similar studies and some attention given to the design and contamination rates reported by the other studies quoted, which have a very wide range of bacteraemia, probably due to similar issues. How effective are measures to reduce contamination rates?

Indicating some clearly defined 'next steps' for research would be helpful. The findings may point to the need for a control group, where blood cultures are done in similar age healthy children to determine if the isolates are causing disease. This is becoming critical as molecular methods are used to determine aetiology of infection, but may also apply to classical methods. Alternatively, altered inclusion criteria. What would need to be done to bring the findings in a future study into line with WHO guidelines? What have previous studies found on this? Discussion of these issues would add value by assisting in the design of future studies.

Minor Essential Revisions

3. Is the word 'staphylococcal' missing before '8%' in line 187? 'The mortality in hospitalized children with bacteraemia was 8% (2/25), and 14% (2/14) in children with non-Staphylococcal bacteraemia.'

4. In table 1, please give the N for each age group at the top.
Discretionary Revisions

None

**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.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests