Response to "Acute Otitis Media in Infants: Comment on Treatment Outcomes"
Andrés Sibbald
Otolaryngology -- Head and Neck Surgery 2013 148: 357
DOI: 10.1177/0194599812471624

The online version of this article can be found at:
http://oto.sagepub.com/content/148/2/357.2

Published by:
SAGE
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AMERICAN ACADEMY OF
OTOLARYNGOLOGY--
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>> Version of Record - Jan 23, 2013
What is This?
The Journal recently published an Invited Article that has clear merits; however, the carelessness of the author is worrisome. Regarding our study, the author writes erroneously: “Tahtinen et al., in an approach they consider holistic and easily applicable, did not measure any individual symptoms.” Unlike the author states, we did measure the treatment effect on 9 individual symptoms as is reported on page 122 and in detail in Figure 2 in the Supplementary Appendix.

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I regret that my comment on this study was inaccurate in stating that the authors “did not measure any individual symptoms.” Their paper and the supplementary appendix clearly describe in detail the careful evaluation of the 9 symptoms that were examined with a time-to-event resolution analysis. I did add immediately, however, in the second sentence of that unjustly brief paragraph on their excellent trial that “They appraised the child’s overall condition, ‘all symptoms simultaneously,’ based on parental assessment.” This is really the point that I was trying to make: that, as occurs in community practice, it is the comprehensive grasp of the observed treatment effect on the child’s illness that best determines the measure of outcome. Validated scoring instruments remind us of important clues, but it is the parent’s all-embracing perception of change that should guide our management decisions. The authors’ letter, in reply to observations on their study, is reassuring for clinicians in that it supports this same concept: “Our component of symptomatic failure was based on parental assessment of the child’s overall condition because no symptom is specific to acute otitis media and the spectrum of symptoms varies among children and also among days in one child. Our holistic approach, easily applicable in clinical practice, did not measure any individual symptom; rather it measured all symptoms simultaneously, including adverse events.”

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Disclosures
Competing interests: None.
Sponsorships: None.
Funding source: None.

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