

Reviewer #1:

Scientific Quality: Grade B (Very good)

Language Quality: Grade B (Minor language polishing)

Conclusion: Minor revision

Dear Reviewer!

Thank you so much for your reviewing of our manuscript.

Our answers (A) to your queries (Q) are below. All changes in the manuscript are highlighted with yellow color.

Specific Comments to Authors:

Q1. INTRODUCTION - The authors should also mention MAS as a potential complication of SLE in children (see: Macrophage Activation Syndrome in Pediatric Systemic Lupus Erythematosus: A Systematic Review of the Diagnostic Aspects. *Front Med (Lausanne)*. 2021 Jun 4;8:681875. doi: 10.3389/fmed.2021.681875) - Rituximab should be introduced in a different paragraph from that providing SLE background. - Overall, the introduction provides a pertinent background and needs only some minor revisions, in terms of (few) language inconsistencies/repetition and as per comments above.

A1. Dear Reviewer! The information about MAS and recommended reference has been added. The additional paragraph has been organized and introduction was elaborated.

Q2. METHODS - I would suggest better organizing it in subsection (study design and population, data collection, ethical statement, statistical analysis, others) - Indicate the exact date delimiting the study period. - Clearly list inclusion and exclusion criteria. Then, provide numerical and demographic information about the study population in the results.

A2. Dear Reviewer! All recommendations done according the Methods section

Q3. RESULTS - Notably, as shown in table 1, 5 patients developed MAS. Therefore, please, mention this condition in the introduction based on the supportive reference. - Following the previous comment on MAS, it seems that the authors report it as clinical feature at the onset, which would be an important point, as also discussed in the suggested paper. Can you clarify if patients developing MAS showed it as disease onset? - Can you clarify PTX in table 1? Do you mean RTX? - Overall, the results are complete.

A3. Dear Reviewer! All our patients had MAS during the onset of the disease. The reference and some information about MAs and it's diagnostics have been added in the Introduction and in the Methods sections. PTX is a RTX, please take my apologize for the error.

Q4. DISCUSSION - I would suggest the authors clearly list and highlight their main findings and novelty at the very beginning of the introduction. - Some recent experiences with rituximab in children should be considered in the discussion, also to provide inputs on the most appropriate indications (see: *Pediatr Nephrol.* 2023 Dec;38(12):4001-4011. doi: 10.1007/s00467-023-06025-6; *J Pediatr.* 2017 Aug;187:213-219.e2. doi: 10.1016/j.jpeds.2017.05.002; others) - Include limitations in the main text and expand this discussion.

A4. Dear Reviewer! The main findings of the study has been added in the beginning of the discussion. More recent studies cited and discussed. The limitation section elaborated.

Q5. CONCLUSION - Highlight better the additional information and conclusion emerging from the present data. TABLES - no major comments

A5. Dear Reviewer! More information in the conclusion added. Someminor typo errors in the tables are fixed. English editing was done.

Dear Reviewer!

Thank you so much for your comments and suggestions. I hope the manuscript has become better.

On behalf of the Authors

Mikhail M. Kostik, MD, PhD, Professor