Reviewer's report

Title: Searching for chronic hepatitis B patients in a low prevalence area - role of racial origin.

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Reviewer: Teh-la I Huo

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General
Authors have conducted a study to efficiently identify new hepatitis B patients in a low endemic area, and they found many such patients were Asian origin. The idea is, however, not new. It is well known that vertical transmission is the predominant mode of transmission of hepatitis B in many countries in Asia, whereas horizontal (sexual, drug abuse, etc) transmission is the major mode of disease spread in the Western countries.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
Throughout the manuscript, anti-HBct should be re-written as anti-HBc.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
There are a lot of typographical and grammatical errors throughout the manuscript. This paper needs careful English editing before being published.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Abstract
The Background is too lengthy. Authors should provide solid data (comparisons between difference populations using percentages and p values) in the Results section. The first sentence in Conclusion should go to Results.

Introduction
This part contains many irrelevant descriptions and should be shortened. Authors can emphasize the importance of identifying patients with hepatitis B because these patients are at an increased risk of liver cirrhosis and hepatoma.

Methods
1. Authors have measured serum ALT levels, but these data are not shown.
2. It is not clear why patients with hepatitis C or D should be excluded. It is well known that hepatitis B, C, and D viruses share similar transmission routes and patients with hepatitis D are always also co-infected with hepatitis B.
3. The definitions of the mode of transmission are not clear and arbitrary, especially the sexual transmission. For instance, it is not clear why mothers presented anti-HBc and anti-HBs negative belong to this category.

Results
1. The information of serum ALT levels should be included.
2. To make data presentation more solid, important or significant findings that appear in the Tables should be cited in the text so that readers can follow the main findings.
Discussion
Some descriptions are redundant and irrelevant. In page 8, lines 15-19, it is not clear why authors would make these discussions.

References
Some references (Ref. 8-11, 16, 17) are too old for quotation (publication year before 1980).

What next?: Reject because scientifically unsound

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

Declaration of competing interests:

none