Reviewer's report

Title: Prevalence of liver fibrosis and risk factors in a general population using non-invasive biomarkers (FibroTest)

Version: 1 Date: 15 March 2010

Reviewer: Guillaume PENARANDA

Reviewer's report:

Poynard T. et al. aim was to use FT as a first-line test and elastography as a confirmation test in order to estimate the prevalence of advanced fibrosis in a general population. They also suggested to identify independent risk factors of fibrosis and to compare the accuracy of a non-selective screening versus selective screening. They concluded that biomarkers permitted to estimate a prevalence of advanced fibrosis of 2.8% in a general population of 40 years or older, and they found several risk factors for selective screening versus non-selective screening.

The manuscript is well written, and authors answered to it aims. The study is of interest in the field of non-invasive markers of fibrosis, as the authors performed a study on the prevalence of liver fibrosis without using invasive liver biopsy.

I recommend publication of this manuscript, but I request some Minor Essential Revisions that could benefit the manuscript.

Minor Essential Revisions

1- Results “Screened population”: Last sentence – Authors reported that included population was not different from French population (Table S2) but there is no way to compare each other. I suggest to p-values or 95%CI in Table S2.

2- Results “Prevalence of Fibrosis”: I suggest homogenizing the reported results in the first sentence: 209 (2.8%; 95%CI 2.4%-3.2%) had FT [...] 25 (0.3%; 95%CI 0.2%-0.5%) had presumed cirrhosis [...] 42 (20%; 95%CI...) had steatotest [...] N (1%; 95%CI...) had NashTest. Authors should report results as N (%; 95%CI) when appropriate all along the manuscript.

3- Table 1: Same remark; I suggest homogenizing the reported results by adding 95%CI for each parameters, as it is done for Carbohydrate Deficient Transferin or even LSM.

4- There are too many tables. I suggest deleting some of them that are not mandatory. Table S1: merge with Table 1. Table S5: Seems not mandatory.

5- Table S4: Shouldn’t we read “cirrhosis” instead of “fibrosis” all along the Table? If not, than the last sentence of “Prevalence of Fibrosis” section should state “Fibrosis” instead of “Cirrhosis”

6- Factors associated with fibrosis: Table 1 should not be cited as it gives no additional information for univariate analysis.
7- Last paragraph of Results section – 1st sentence: typo LCM à LSM
8- Discussion “Prevalence of advanced liver fibrosis”: last paragraph – delete “was” from “permitted to was attribute”

Discretionary Revisions

1- Discussion: 1st sentence should be deleted. It’s not a very good way to begin a discussion with limitations of the study.
2- Tables S6 and S7 should not be supporting tables, but Table 6 and Table 7 as well. These tables are of importance.
3- I suggest reporting page numbers, or at least line numbers.

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