Reviewer's report

Title: Risk factors for hepatitis C virus infection among blood donors in southern Brazil: a case-control study

Authors:

Ajacio BM Brandao (ajacio@via-rs.net)
Sandra C Fuchs (scfuchs@zaz.com.br)

Version: 2 Date: 14 Jun 2002

Reviewer: Prof Edward Murphy

Level of interest: A paper whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Advice on publication: Accept after discretionary revisions

All comments compulsory

Comments to the authors:

This is a case control study of risk factors for hepatitis C seropositivity among blood donors in southern Brazil. Overall, the study is well done.

Specific comments:

In the abstract, results, last paragraph: Delete the word "strongly"; the data reported are at best suggestive of sexual transmission. The last paragraph of the results is duplicative of the conclusion paragraph in the abstract.

Background, first paragraph: Although reference number four may in fact indicate that 20 to 58% of patients with HCV have chronic liver disease, this statistic may have been from a hospital based study and may not be applicable to a healthy blood donor population, and the authors should call attention to this. In general risks of disease due to HCV have been overestimated in the literature.

Methods: Was RIBA testing done to confirm hepatitis C seropositivity? If not, did the author have any independent data supporting the use of EIA only.

Statistical analysis: Although this hierarchical logistic regression approach is interesting, concerned that the data in Table 2 regarding environmental risk factors for hepatitis C were not adjusted for injection drug use.

Results, second paragraph, last sentence: A minor point since they have never been screened is a commentary and should be reserved for the discussion.

Results, social and sexual behavior, second paragraph: Although the odds ratio for having two to four
sexually transmitted diseases was 6.2 the confidence intervals on this value are very wide, therefore it does not necessarily represent a strong association.

Discussion, second paragraph: There is a typographical spelling error in the sentence aEoeHVC testaE. In the last sentence of the same paragraph, the authors state that aEoesince most episodes of hepatitis C are free of symptomsaE but they also found a significant association with previous jaundice in Table 3.

Discussion, paragraph four, second sentence: A language issue; suggest substituting the word aEoeplausibleaE for the word aEoeconceivableaE.

Discussion, last paragraph, last sentence: Suggest substituting the word aEoealthoughaE for the words aEoeeven thoughaE.

Conclusions: First line. A spelling error aEoeanti-VHCaE.

**Competing interests:**

None declared.