Author’s response to reviews

Title: Synergic Effect of Chronic Hepatitis C Infection and Beta Thalassemia Major with Marked Hepatic Iron Overload on Liver Fibrosis: A Retrospective Cross-Sectional Study

Authors:

Farid Azmoudeh Ardalan (azmoudeh@sina.tums.ac.ir)
Mohammad RF Osquei (m_osquei@yahoo.com)
Mohsen N Toosi (mohsen_nasiri@yahoo.com)
Guiti Iravanloo (g_irvanloo@yahoo.com)

Version: 3 Date: 9 July 2004

Author’s response to reviews:

To Whom It May Concern:

I would like to submit the revised version of our manuscript (MS: 1563411135716605) entitled "Synergic Effect of Chronic Hepatitis C Infection and Beta Thalassemia Major with Marked Hepatic Iron Overload on Liver Fibrosis: A Retrospective Cross-Sectional Study"

I considered all comments of the reviewers point to point and revised the manuscript accordingly.

Reviewer: Emanuele Angelucci:

1. In methods: selection criteria for groups 2 and 3 are better specified (Methods: lines 25-31).

2. Table 1 is changed as the reviewer requested.

3. I agree with the reviewer, quantitative determination of liver iron concentration could have been more informative, but this determination is not practically possible on paraffin blocks in our institution at the present time. On the other hand, other studies have shown a good correlation between hepatic iron concentration and semiquantitative scoring of liver iron.

4. The effect of immunosuppression on liver fibrosis is omitted from the discussion.

5. "Thalassemia major" is used instead of BTM all over the manuscript, but the abbreviation of BTM/CHI for patients with both beta thalassemia major and chronic HCV infection is kept.

6. The spelling of Angelucci is corrected (Second paragraph of Results and Discussion).

Reviewer: Caterina Borgna-Pignatti

7. The collection of data was performed between April 2001 and January 2004 and the manuscript revised accordingly (Methods: lines 22-25).

8. Patient selection criteria are better explained in the methods section (Methods: lines 25-31).

9. A paragraph concerning sample size determination is added to the statistical analysis (Second paragraph of statistical analysis). According to this sample size calculation only 20 patients were assigned to each group. On the other hand, since the degree of fibrosis is significantly different in the three groups (with a p value<0.05), the sample size seems to be adequate.

10. The pathologist was blind to the diagnoses and it is mentioned in the revised version (Methods: line 34).

11. A few lines concerning the importance of interferon therapy are added to conclusion section (Conclusion: lines 4-10)
12. The second line of the results is changed as the reviewer commented.

13. The spelling of Angelucci is corrected (Second paragraph of Results and Discussion).

14. Some grammatical mistakes are corrected.

15. I agree with the reviewer, one of the major limitations of this study is that the duration of the infection is unknown in the CHI patients and I have mentioned this limitation in the discussion.

Regards,

Farid Azmoudeh Ardalan