Reviewer's report

Title: Epidemiologic study of chronic hepatitis B virus infection in male volunteer blood donors in Karachi, Pakistan

Version: 4 Date: 27 June 2005

Reviewer: Keith Sabin

Reviewer's report:

General
It seems that you have dealt with most of my major concerns about your interpretation of the results. However, I think you have misunderstood some of the citations you use to justify your choice of interpretation. While anti-HBc is not protective from infection in the way anti-HBs is, it is still indicative of prior infection and therefore there is virtually zero probability of re-infection by HBV. There are few case reports of such re-infection, but it is by no means typical and one cannot assume, in an epidemiologic survey, that anti-HBc(+) individuals are susceptible. Further, anti-HBc is less likely to wane to undetectable level than anti-HBs, so misclassification with anti-HBc is less than that with anti-HBs.

In any case, I think it would help if you add a simple statement regarding the case-control study, that ascertainment of controls' serostatus may have non-differentially led to controls who are not susceptible to HB infection due to previous infection or immunization, thereby biasing results toward the null.

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

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

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