Reviewer's report

Title: Genetic variability in the precore and core promoter regions of hepatitis B virus strains in Karachi

Version: 2 Date: 30 January 2006

Reviewer: Fiona Davidson

Reviewer's report:

General

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

specific comments :

p7 Ins 6 to 9 : were these samples retested and did the control band work in each run? It is correct that certain deletion mutations will not be detected by INNOLiPa, these are however quite rare and would be worth investigating.

p7 Ins 18 to 19 : a wild type and mutant mix would be detectable by INNOLiPa. The point that the authors are trying to make is not clear and the remainder of the paragraph is not very clear either.

generally : The study and results are sound however the discussion is lacking in emphasis and correlation with the clinical relevance of the data. The discussion would be strengthened by reference to the finding that ALT values in both groups are similar and lack of clinical signs of cirrhosis/disease. The discussion would be improved by considering and referring to the following publications 1. Fukada et al. J Pediatr Gastroenerol Nutr 2001;33:301-306. 2. Bozdayi AM et al. J Clin Virol 2001;21:91-101. 3. Davidson et al. Vox Sang 2005;88:87-92. Finally, Table 2 could be presented in a more concise manner.

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

spelling :

p3 In 13 insert 'a' before serology
p3 In 15 need a capital B in HBeAg
p3 In 17 insert the before precore
p3 In 21 start paragraph with A instead of The
p5 In 12 change HBsAg to HBeAg
p6 In 25 need a capital B in HBeAg
p7 In 10 delete that which is duplicated
p7 In 18 insert 'be' before due
p7 In 20 delete like and insert 'such as'

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests