Reviewer's report

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

Version: 2 Date: 28 March 2006

Reviewer: christian trepo

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General
The paper by Abbas et al, “Genetic variability….” describe the prevalence of hepatitis B virus (HBV genotypes) and mutations in the precore and basal core promoter regions in HBV strains from Pakistan. To this end INNO LIPA assay was used which is the reference for this purpose among commercial assays. These results are the first to report genotypes and preC/C mutants from Pakistan.
The data are clearly exposed and discussed

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

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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)
- In the discussion section the authors rely on previous studies on the same topic on patients from different regions of the world, they should provide precise numbers and tell how they do estimate their findings as compared to the cited studies.
- Same remark concerning precore and BCP variants incidence among Genotype D patients in this report as compared to studies from other countries.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
- Mutations results presented in table one may be presented as a figure like histograms or….in order to better visualize the pattern of mutations.
- Sequencing may bring complementary and informative data regarding the HBeAg negative cases (38%) for which INNOLIPA was not able to detect mutations.