Reviewer's report

Title: Rifaximin for maintenance therapy in antibiotic-dependent pouchitis

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Reviewer: Tanja Kuehbacher

Reviewer's report:

The authors of the study "rifaximin for maintenance therapy in antibiotic-dependent pouchitis" investigated the efficacy and safety of rifaximin in maintaining remission in antibiotic-dependent pouchitis. Therefore they investigated a cohort of fifty-one patients with chronic antibiotic-dependent pouchitis in an open label historical study. 33 (65%) patients remained in remission after three months, the primary endpoint of the study. In total, only two patients successfully continued maintenance for 24 months.

There are several limitations of the study, which were discussed clearly by the authors themselves: 1. the character of the study performed: with a historical cohort open-label study there are too many biases to conclude the effectiveness of rifaximin. 2. The aim of the study was to investigate the efficacy and tolerability of rifaximin in maintaining symptomatic and endoscopic remission in patients with antibiotic-dependent pouchitis, but only in 30 of the 51 patients the endoscopic data were complete. 3. The primary endpoint with a follow-up at three months after beginning maintenance therapy with rifaximin was too short to conclude the efficacy and safety of rifaximin as a long-term treatment for maintaining remission in antibiotic-dependent pouchitis. Especially, comparison with studies with probiotic agents should be avoided, regarding the character of the studies as randomized, placebo-controlled studies with follow-ups of 12 months at least. 4. The doses of rifaximin used in this study are not standardized. 5. I agree with the authors, that further investigations with a prolonged follow-up, randomized, placebo-controlled trial with standardized doses of medication and endoscopic examinations in all patients are needed to adequately determine the efficacy and safety of rifaximin for maintaining remission in antibiotic-dependent pouchitis.

In summary, even so the study has its limitations; I would consider it for publication, because: 1. this study polarizes and therefore stimulates scientific discussions. 2. Due to the lack of studies in this field, a study with an interesting and provoking thesis can lead to further studies with a randomized placebo-controlled setting and e.g. a comparison with other agents e.g. probiotics.

Nevertheless the authors should change the conclusion of their abstract before the study can be accepted for publication. Due to all the limitations, which the authors themselves discuss rifaximin should not be considered to be effective and safe for long-term treatment in maintaining remission in antibiotic-dependent pouchitis without some limitations.
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: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests below.