Reviewer's report

Title: Etiology of liver cirrhosis does not influence the severity of hepatic encephalopathy: a cross-sectional study

Version: 1 Date: 26 August 2008

Reviewer: Stephen Harrison

Reviewer's report:

Kalaitzakis et al present an interesting study of 156 Swedish cirrhotic patients with the aim of investigating the etiology of cirrhosis on the prevalence of hepatic encephalopathy as well as any differences in quality of life and rates of diabetes.

Strengths of this study include the relatively large number of patients and good study design with comprehensive data available to calculate MELD and C-P scores as well as cognitive function testing with psychometric tests (number connection) and HE scoring on a scale of 0-4.

The finding of diabetes mellitus being more common in patients with hepatocellular rather than cholestatic cirrhosis support existing data and does not represent a novel finding. However, the negative finding that hepatic encephalopathy was equally found in all causes of cirrhosis as well as the multivariate analysis that related cognitive impairment to age, liver disease severity, and diabetes are all novel & clinically relevant findings.

Weaknesses of this paper include single center cross sectional nature of the trial as well as lack of neurophysiologic tools to assess for HE (which is mentioned appropriately by the authors). Also, on page #10, the statement diabetes mellitus was "more common" should be changed to less common in the group of cholestatic cirrhosis. The conclusion paragraph also has a small typographical error in the first sentence.

In summary, a well conducted & interesting study with some clinically relevant conclusions.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.