Reviewer's report

Title: Cholecystectomy and sphincterotomy in patients with mild acute biliary pancreatitis in Sweden 1988 - 2003: a nationwide register study

Version: 1 Date: 23 November 2008

Reviewer: Raffaele Pezzilli

Reviewer's report:

Overview
The authors report the effect of cholecystectomy/sphincterotomy within 30 days of index admission, on readmission rate, total cholecystectomy rate at one year, and mortality at 90 days in the Swedish population. The data were extracted from nationwide hospital discharge and death certificate register. The conclusions are that after an attack of mild acute biliary pancreatitis, 55% of patients in this audit had cholecystectomy within one year of index admission but only 20% within one month. Cholecystectomy during index stay slightly prolonged this stay, but drastically reduced readmissions for biliary indications. The data are similar to those already reported in other European and American countries and they do not add any useful information on this topic.

Major compulsory revision
The main criticism of this study has been underlined by the same authors: even if the authors have used nation-wide and validated register data based upon personal identification numbers unique for each citizen, which makes it possible to follow individuals over time and to record diagnoses and procedures during each hospital stay they have limited information on patients' clinical status. They are not able to apply the Atlanta severity classification method to assess the mild acute biliary pancreatitis: this represents a bias for a study like this that would assess the effect of cholecystectomy on mild acute biliary pancreatitis.

Discretionary revisions
1. In the results section the authors should report the mean age and the respective range of the patients studied (see Table 1).
2. The four different MBAP groups studied should be reported in the methods section

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

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