Reviewer’s report

Title: Plastic or metal stents for benign biliary strictures: a systematic review

Version: 1 Date: 23 August 2009

Reviewer: Martin Freeman

Reviewer’s report:

This is very well executed and timely review of the literature on endoscopic therapy of benign biliary strictures. The main limitation is lack of separation of types of strictures. The authors are no doubt aware of the Bismuth Class of benign post-operative injuries, I-V, with hilar strictures much more difficult to treat than mid or distal bile duct strictures. This is especially true for post liver transplant strictures, where there are at least three distinct types: anastamotic (in deceased donor transplants) anastamotic for living donor (usually much more complex and smaller ducts, sometimes multiple anastamoses). Then there are nonanastamotic (ischemic) injuries that tend to be hilar, and very difficult to treat.

Might the outcomes reported have as much to do with type of stricture treated as to technique? Probably cannot be determined from studies reported, but this should be emphasized in discussion. Also, there may be selection bias in the series of cSEMS, as they may have been chosen in more "refractory" cases.

Would simply add these issues to discussion.

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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

Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests'